love and hate sound just the same to me
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by starless_skies

Summary

The last thing Jungkook wants to deal with is his enemy's secret lover. But when Jimin shows up on Jungkook's doorstep in the middle of the night, shivering and covered in bruises, Jungkook has to push aside his conflicting hatred to help him.

Notes

deleting soon. read it while you can i guess

a piece of paper

Jimin knew he was in trouble as soon as he heard the front door slam. He curled further into the blankets of Minwo's bed, his body trembling. Footsteps were pounding up the stairs; Jimin shut his eyes so hard they ached.

"Little *bitch,* " Minwo cursed, flinging open the door to their bedroom.

Jimin stole several shuddering breaths as the bed dipped, Minwo sitting down in order to reach him better. There was a crushing grip on his arm, then, yanking him out of the sheets, forcing Jimin to face his boyfriend.

Minwo grabbed both of Jimin's biceps, shaking him hard. "Where is it?"

Jimin shook his head, unable to look at his boyfriend. Minwo shook him harder, demanding again and again to know where 'it' was. "What?" Jimin breathed. "Where's *what?"*

Minwo pulled Jimin closer until their foreheads were almost touching, until he could see every little eyelash, every drop of anger. "The paper. The one that little fucker gave you."

Jimin shook his head again and again. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I saw you in the security tapes. Don't fucking lie to me."

"It's gone," Jimin whispered desperately. "I threw it away."

"Liar!" Minwo snapped, shaking Jimin again. "Where is it? Tell me *now."*

Jimin was shaking so hard he couldn't see right. His vision was blurry, but not with tears. No, tears made Minwo angry. "I don't-"

"You do! I saw you take it!"

"I didn't-"

"Shut-"

"But I didn't-"

"Stop fucking interrupting me!" Jimin flinched when Minwo raised a hand, a warning he would get slapped. Minwo's outrage boiled into pure fury, his voice dropping into the deadly quiet that rattled Jimin to his bones. "I'm going to give you one more chance to tell me, Min-ah."

The nickname was a slap to the face in and of itself. Jimin had used to love it, loved it when Minwo called it out during their moments of passion, whispering it into his hair as they fell asleep and woke up together. Now, he hated it. He hated it *so much.*

"He did give me a paper," Jimin started, seeing the deadly glint in his boyfriend's eyes. He swallowed hard, forcing the urge to cry back down his throat. "But I threw it away. I threw it away; I promise."

Minwo's nose crinkled with a barely contained snarl. "What did it say? Why was he talking to you? What did you have him write?"

“I didn’t look at it,” Jimin lied. “I didn’t look at it, I promise. I know how much he’s done-”

“What did it say?”

“I didn’t-”

“Don’t lie, Min-ah. We both know you can’t control yourself. You looked at it. *I know you did.”*

“I didn’t.”

“Then why was he talking to you?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” Minwo repeated. His grip tightened around Jimin’s bicep, making the younger hiss at the pain shooting through his quickly numbing arm. “Really?”

“You’re hurting me,” Jimin whined, cupping his hand over Minwo’s crushing grip.

Minwo’s lip finally curled up into a full on snarl. “You’re cheating on me.”

Jimin’s eyes widened. Heart stopped and started and twisted in his chest, dropping into his stomach, into a pit of dread. *“No,”* he breathed. “No, Minwo-ssi. I wouldn’t cheat on you.”

“You’re cheating on me with *him.* I bet you have before. Like that fucking day in the lobby.”

Tears finally welled up in Jimin’s eyes; he couldn’t keep them back any longer. He was a trembling wreck, barely able to keep upright without Minwo’s hold. Jimin reached up with shaking hands and cupped his boyfriend’s face, making one last attempt to calm him down.

“It was just a piece of paper. I haven’t seen him since then. Please just- please just trust-”

“Trust you?” Minwo hissed through gritted teeth. His grip tightened to the point where Jimin finally cried out. “I can’t trust you.”

“Please-”

“Stop it. Stop begging. And stop fucking *crying.* You know I hate crying.” He finally letting go, shoving Jimin away from him. Jimin was flung back, rolling off the bed and hitting the floor. Minwo’s heavy footsteps were already storming around towards him.

Jimin curled in on himself, his arms shielding his head, knees tucked up to his chest. It was no use. No use arguing now. He knew that as Minwo reached for him, hauling him up, demanding he stand. But his legs were too weak, a static panic freezing his limbs. And soon he was being dragged.

Minwo hauled him out of the bedroom and down the spiral staircase by his collar. Jimin gagged, clawing at Minwo’s cruel hands as his shirt dug into his throat. His body slammed into each stair, and Minwo dropped him down the final few, causing Jimin to land on his neck.

Something popped and Jimin yelped, sounding like a strangled cat, tears streaming freely down his face as his boyfriend kicked him hard in the ribs. Jimin took the blow, hands gripping the back of his neck, trying to keep the burning pain from becoming overwhelming.

And then Minwo was kneeling in front of him. His face had softened, the snarl gone. He had changed so drastically in just a few seconds, going from the monster he knew to the man he’d

fallen in love with two years ago. “Be careful, Min-ah,” he said, helping Jimin sit up.

Minwo turned around, grabbing something… He was holding Jimin’s shoes in his hands now, and the final thread of terror in Jimin’s stomach solidified. Jimin knew what this meant. Knew what it meant as Minwo began slipping them onto his feet, gently tightening them up, tying the laces. He grabbed Jimin’s light blue fuzzy jacket from the closet, pulling his hands away from his neck and feeding his arms through the sleeves.

Minwo ruffled Jimin’s cotton candy pink hair, looking him over for a lot longer than necessary before handing Jimin his flip phone. He stood up, walking over to the door.

“Now?” Jimin panicked.

Minwo ignored him. Opened the door. A gust of bone-chilling wind swept into the hallway, making Jimin shiver harder than he already was. *“Out.”*

Jimin was wearing shorts with long socks and teal converse shoes, was wearing a black and white striped shirt beneath the baby blue jacket. He ran a hand through his pink hair, sniffling pathetically. “It’s winter… I’ll freeze.”

Minwo smiled, no pity in those black eyes. “If you don’t follow the rules of *my* house, you can’t be here.”

“But I have nowhere else to go.”

“And why is that, Min-ah?” Minwo asked darkly. “You have no friends because *nobody wants you.* Not even your parents wanted you,” Jimin flinched so hard he almost fell backwards. “I took you in. I gave you everything. I fed you and gave you a bed to sleep in and I loved you… I loved you so much. But you fucked up when you decided to cheat on me.”

“Minwo,” Jimin nearly gasped, his lungs aching for air, his head spinning. He had never gotten used to his boyfriend’s cruel words. *His parents-- his brother...* “I wouldn’t cheat on you. *Please.”*

Minwo shook his head. “You can’t lie to me, Min-ah. I’ll always find out.” He leaned down, kissing Jimin on the forehead, lips lingering and tender. “I’ll call you when you can come back.”

And then his big hand was on the small of Jimin’s back, guiding him out the door into the lightly falling snow. Jimin whipped around, trying one last time to reason with his boyfriend, but the slam of the door registered in his mind just before the sight of it did.

Locked out.

He was locked out. In the snow. Wearing shorts and a thin jacket.

The snow itself seemed peaceful. The street lamp was glowing warmly, making the soft blanket of snow covering the streets and buildings and trees glitter. Flakes falling lazily; not hurried, not harsh. Beautiful. But deadly.

Minwo had kicked him out many times before. But never in the winter. Never like this. And Jimin, he didn’t have anywhere to go. He had no friends, no family that lived here. He didn’t have anyone’s number but Minwo’s. (His boyfriend had made sure the only two contacts he had on his little flip phone were *Minwo’s cell* and *Minwo’s work.*)

Jimin’s hand curled around the phone, clutching it desperately, trying to think of anywhere he could go. It was late and none of the stores would be open. He might be able to find a gas station,

but even then, he'd get kicked out after an hour (he would know; it'd happened before). In the past, he'd always gone to the park, slept on one of the benches (Minwo didn't like him sleeping on the porch), but it was snowing. He could freeze to death if he slept in the park.

His mind was spinning and whirling, and tears were still streaming down his face as he sniffed, wiping his cheeks with the back of his fuzzy sleeve. His hands were turning red already, that much he could see by the light of the street lamp, so he tucked them into his jacket pockets.

His hand brushed against a crumpled piece of paper.

His heart stopped. Breath broke in his throat. *No way.* There was *no way in hell* this was where the paper had gone. And Minwo had unintentionally given it to him: his one and only lifeline. Because even if this guy hated him with everything he had, he was the only person Jimin could call. Despite the last time they'd seen each other, despite what the man might have possibly done, Jimin would rather live than freeze to death.

He fished the paper from his jacket pocket with trembling hands, smoothing it out, looking over his shoulder at the windows to make sure Minwo wasn't watching him. The windows were all closed though, the only light on coming from the upstairs bedroom.

Jimin opened the flip phone and typed each digit of the phone number with trembling fingers, the handwriting mocking him. It was pitiful, really, that the only person he could turn to was someone who actually *loathed* Jimin. Hadn't at one point. But it was his only option.

He pressed dial.

The phone rang twice before someone picked up.

"Hello?"

Jimin froze for a second, his tongue turned to sand. Remembered what'd happened the last time they'd spoken. He cleared his throat, running a frozen hand through his hair. "Jungkook?"

"Jimin?"

Bewilderment. Absolute loss for words. Both of them struggled to say anything, and Jimin suddenly thought this wasn't such a good idea. Maybe the park bench wouldn't be so bad.

"Aish," Jimin whispered. "This is… this is really stupid. I just-- I need…" His heart was in his throat, and he tried to ignore the way the wind was ruffling through his clothes, ripping away any heat from his body. He glanced back at the house. "I need a place to stay. Just for the night."

Silence on the other end. Jimin almost thought Jungkook had hung up before he heard, *"Why are you calling* ***me,*** *though* ? *"*

Jimin swallowed hard. "I don't… I don't have anywhere else to go."

He felt ridiculous, then. More ridiculous and pathetic than he'd felt in years. He remembered that last burning look Jungkook had thrown his way before telling him never to call agan. Remembered just how much the young man had done to Minwo. It was a betrayal to his boyfriend, a backstab in their relationship. And Jungkook would be sure to tell Minwo, rub it in his face… and when that happened, Jimin would have hell to pay. But for now, he'd rather live to see that happen.

"Jimin, I don't… why? What happened? I thought you lived with Minwo." He sounded irritated, as if the very thought of seeing Jimin made him want to punch a wall.

Jimin drew a shuddering breath, his hands and feet beginning to lock up with cold. “I do… I do… he-- we had a fight… please. I know you hate me… but it’s just for one night. Then I won’t bother you ever again.” Jimin kicked his foot through the snow, watching as it sprayed up into the air. “I’ll be gone before you even wake up.”

Jungkook sighed, the sound rattling over the speaker. It was heavy with reluctance. *“Fine.”*

Jungkook held his phone in his hands, staring down at the ended call screen. He texted Jimin his address, not knowing what the hell to feel about the whole thing.

Initially, he’d wanted to curse Jimin out and hang up, but it just wasn’t who he was. Because as much as he hated to admit it, there was a part of him that could never turn down someone who needed help; it wasn’t in his personality to be cruel or cold. But just because he couldn’t refuse to help someone, didn’t mean he had to like them.

And Jimin… something in his voice had sounded so… broken? So hurt and exhausted and small. Jungkook almost thought Jimin had been crying, his voice wavering, a little pitchy.

“What’s wrong?”

Jungkook hadn’t realized he’d been standing in the middle of the kitchen, frowning down at his phone screen, staring at his call history. The unknown number Jimin had just called him from. The number he’d deleted months ago.

“Sorry, hyung,” Jungkook murmured, watching as Yoongi walked into the kitchen, carrying his toothbrush in one hand and his phone in the other. He was listening to music with his big headphones, the sound just barely audible. His mint green hair was shaggy, bangs hanging low over his brows, eyes squinted with sleepiness.

“What’s wrong?” He asked again.

Jungkook shook his head, finally turning off his phone and slipping it into his pocket. He folded his arms over his chest, leaning against the back of the couch, thinking. “I just got a call from Park Jimin.”

One of Yoongi’s brows rose. “Park Jimin? As in Kim Minwo’s Park Jimin?”

Jungkook nodded, a knot tightening in his chest. “He needed a place to stay for the night, so he called me.”

Yoongi had the nerve to look a little shocked. He started brushing his teeth slowly, pausing his music. “Didn’t he lie to you for like a year and a half? I thought you hated him.”

Jungkook shrugged his shoulders. “I do.”

“Then why’d he call you?”

“He said he had nowhere else to go.”

Yoongi hummed from deep in his throat. “Did you say yes?”

Jungkook merely nodded.

“Why?”

“He sounded desperate.”

Yoongi frowned around the toothbrush, pausing. His eyes narrowed a little, his gaze becoming intense. “Is Hayoon in on this?”

Jungkook stiffened, shifting uncomfortably from one foot to the other, pushing up from leaning against the couch. “Why do you think Hayoon has anything to do with this? Maybe I’m just a nice person.”

“After everything Minwo’s done to you and Hayoon? After everything Jimin lied about?” Yoongi scoffed, finishing brushing his teeth, spitting into the sink. He raised a glass of water to his lips, tipping some in his mouth before swishing and spitting again. When he was done, he set the glass down, sighing. “You *are* a nice person, Jungkook-ah, but Lee Hayoon isn’t all the time and it seems like you’re listening to her more and more these days.”

Irritation prickled along the back of Jungkook’s neck. “She’s my friend.”

“She’s a bitch.”

Jungkook rolled his eyes. “She can be sometimes, but she’s really helped me a lot through this whole ordeal.”

“We have, too. Your hyungs have always been there for you.”

The irritation simmered down a little. “I know... And I love my hyungs. You’re my family. But I’m not going to hurt anyone.”

“You’re hot blooded. I just don’t want something bad to happen. What if Minwo finds out he’s here?”

“Not going to happen, hyung. He’s just staying the night and then he’ll be gone,” Jungkook assured. “And I haven’t even told Hayoon.”

His hyung sighed. He patted Jungkook on the shoulder, hand lingering. He wasn’t very good with affection-- most people saw him as uncaring and distant-- but Jungkook knew this was him showing his concern in the best way he could. Yoongi’s hand squeezed Jungkook’s shoulder lightly, awkwardly looking up at his dongsaeng. “Just… don’t do something stupid. I don’t want you to get more hurt than you already are. And I’m here… if you need me.”

Jungkook kept Yoongi’s gaze as the elder finally lowered his hand, shaking his head. His hyungs had practically raised him, and sometimes Jungkook thought they knew him too well.

“You worry too much,” Jungkook complained, deciding to try and make light of the situation. “Now go to bed, hyung. You never get enough sleep and you’re scary when you’re tired.”

Yoongi watched the younger through a half-lidded glare. “Whatever,” he grumbled, fishing his phone from his pocket and pressing play on his music. He offered a quick good night and one more warning not to do anything stupid before he left, making his way upstairs.

Jungkook watched him go and then waited, pacing nervously, trying to clear his head, steady his heart. He really did hate Jimin, hated even seeing his face, knew it would be hard to control his distaste. Especially after what'd happened the last time they'd seen each other, at the courthouse months previous. So after almost an hour of waiting, Jungkook began to think it was all a prank.

Began to feel stupid for believing Minwo's lover would call him so late at night and ask to spend the night.

He was just about to give up and go upstairs when there was finally a knock on the door.

the lover of my enemy

Jungkook waited a few moments, waited until he heard another knock, quiet and soft. And he slowly walked to the door, didn't want it to seem like he had been anxiously waiting for the past hour. He unlocked the door, opening it just a crack, though he already knew who it would be.

And there he was. Compared to the last time Jungkook had seen him, Jimin was infinitely skinnier, face almost gaunt, jaw sharp and cheeks hollowed.

~~God, it'd only been a few months… why was he so skinny?~~

Pink hair with a hint of rose gold undertones, wearing a blue, fuzzy jacket and a striped shirt and… *shorts?* What the hell? Jimin was shivering madly, his eyes stinging with tears from the cold, his nose and ears bright red, hands tucked into his armpits. His exposed legs were red as well, his lips purple… and there was no car.



"Did you walk here?" Jungkook asked, a sharpness in his voice he couldn't hold back.

Jimin flinched at his tone. Looked down at his snow caked converses, lifting his shoulders in a tense shrug. He looked miserable. Absolutely miserable. Jungkook could tell he'd been crying by his puffy eyes, could see there was something off by the way he was making himself as small as possible.

Jungkook opened the door wider, indicating for the nervous wreck on his porch to come in. Jimin looked at him with wide eyes, as if he hadn't really believed Jungkook would actually let him in, and part of Jungkook was surprised, too.

“You walked here?” Jungkook prompted again.

Jimin blinked a few times, clearing himself from his daze before cautiously stepping up into the warmth of the house. Cold radiated off of him as he passed Jungkook, hovering just a few feet inside as Jungkook shut the door, locking it back up.

“I don’t have a car… or a license,” Jimin confessed. “Sorry for taking so long…” He turned to face Jungkook, but couldn’t look the taller young man in the eye. “I, uh… I got lost once or twice. I’m not very good with directions.”

Jungkook wanted to delight in the fact that Jimin had suffered a little to get to his house, but was too shocked at the fact that Jimin really *was* that desperate. Desperate enough that he’d walked through a snow storm in a thin jacket and shorts. Hadn’t even asked for a ride.

“Shit, you could’ve told me that. I would’ve come and picked you up.” Jungkook watched as Jimin quickly shook his head, finally untucking his hands from his armpits and twisting them together, rubbing his palms-- a nervous tick.

“I didn’t… want to... I didn’t want to trouble you,” Jimin’s gaze met his for a split second before his eyes feel back to the floor. He rubbed at his red nose with the back of his fuzzy blue sleeve, sniffing heavily. “Well, trouble you more than I already have. You’re probably tired from staying up.”

Jungkook couldn’t keep himself from staring at Jimin, a little shook. *Jungshook,* as his hyungs called it. He had too many questions. This whole situation was completely unexpected… completely random. It was suspicious, all of it. But Jimin seemed to genuinely feel bad, *guilty* even .

“It’s no trouble, really,” Jungkook assured him. “I’d rather you not walk through a snowstorm.”

Jimin seemed to relax a little at Jungkook’s lighter tone. He was still shivering, still standing there like a deer in headlights, but he didn’t look as nervous as he had before. “I’m sorry, though. I just… I didn’t-- I mean I don’t have…” He ran a hand through his wet, messy pink hair, closing his eyes for a few seconds as he took a deep breath. “It won’t happen again.”

Jungkook shrugged, taking the pause as an opportunity to lead Jimin over to the couch. “We don’t have an extra bed, but we have a couch…”

“We?” Jimin asked, eyes darting around the room, even looking behind himself as if he was afraid of getting jumped.

“I have roomates.” *Oh god, don’t say it, don’t say it…* “That’s what happens when you’re about to lose your multimillion dollar company.”

Jimin met Jungkook’s gaze head on, surprising the younger. Jimin had seemed like a kicked dog tonight, so Jungkook hadn’t expected any of the fierceness that now burned in his eyes. It looked like he was about to say something, about to snap, continue their argument from that night months ago.

Jungkook sighed. “Listen, after what happened that night in the courthouse… I really don’t want anything to do with you. But I don’t want to fight with you tonight. Let me go get you a pillow and blanket.”

“No, it’s okay…” He was flustered, as if the idea of sleeping with bedding had sent him into a panic. “It’s fine, really. I don’t need anything.”

Jungkook raised an eyebrow. “You don’t want a blanket? Or a pillow? You look like you’re freezing.” He made a point of looking Jimin up and down, seeing how Jimin was still shivering, his pink hair wet and sticking to his forehead with melted snow, his legs covered in goosebumps and his fingers and nose and ears still an angry red.

But Jimin was shaking his head again. “No, I’ll be fine. I really don’t want--” he sighed, “I don’t want to be a burden.”

Jungkook didn’t really know what to do with himself. He rubbed the back of his neck from beneath his hood. Was it annoying that Jimin had called this late to come over? Yes. Was it annoying that he was Minwo’s lover, meaning Jungkook hated both of them? Yes. But a burden? “You’re not a burden.”

Jimin didn’t look like he believed Jungkook, but he nodded anyways. “I don’t want to keep you up any longer. You should… you should get to bed.”

Jungkook swallowed the bubbling fire in his throat. Wanted to argue, tell Jimin it wasn’t his place to tell him to go to bed. It was ridiculous, really-- childish, even. He couldn’t stop the annoyance from reaching his face, saw how Jimin shrank at his own words, folding his arms over his stomach, watching the floor intently.

“Good night,” Jungkook forced out, voice low.

He watched as Jimin sheepishly slinked over to the couch, sitting down. Jungkook sighed before turning away from Minwo’s lover and flicking off the lights.

The room was engulfed in darkness, the only light coming from the snow outside, glowing faintly with the city lights. Jungkook was just stepping into the hallway, silently beginning his walk up to his bedroom before he paused. Waited a moment. He cast Jimin one last glance from down the hall, looking over his shoulder.

Jimin had taken off his shoes, his feet rubbing together to find any semblance of warmth. Had curled into a ball, his shoulders shaking violently, visible even in the darkness. And there was a hurt chained to him that Jungkook could feel, a thick sort of anguish heavy in the air. He couldn’t feel pity for him… no. Jimin was Minwo’s lover. Jungkook would never feel bad for anything that happened between those two. Whatever it was, Jimin had brought it on himself.

But he did feel something. An urge to… comfort him? It felt wrong to leave him sobbing on a couch, freezing, with no bedding… but Jimin had refused his help, and the idea of actually comforting him made Jungkook feel weird.

So Jungkook pushed aside the ridiculous pang in his chest and made his way up to his room. Jimin had promised to be gone before he woke up, and he was hoping that would be the case.

Jimin didn’t sleep well that night. He was so cold he couldn’t feel his feet or hands, took at least an hour to stop shivering. He ended up taking off his blue jacket, curling into the smallest position he could and covering himself with it.

He drifted in and out of consciousness, his mind snapping back to the feeling of Minwo’s lips tenderly kissing his forehead before pushing him out into a storm. It was confusing. So fucking confusing, the way he could be a monster one moment and a saint the next.

Jimin hadn't realized he'd fallen asleep until he woke up later, the pale morning light filtering through the window. It was snowing lightly still, the entire world blanketed in a pure white that had always given him a sense of glee as a child. So he smiled a little, a tired smile that failed to meet his eyes.

He almost forgot where he was. Almost forgot what he was doing. But when he looked around the barely familiar room, seeing the front door he'd come in through the previous night and the window that didn't belong in his own home, the dread from yesterday settled over him once more.

He was actually feeling a little more than dread. He felt cold still, as if the thin jacket covering his curled up body wasn't enough to keep him warm. And he knew. He knew he was getting sick. His head felt stuffy, his mind sluggish, his body groaning as he forced himself to sit up.

He moaned as he positioned himself upright, legs dangling over the side, sweeping at the cold floor. And sitting up, everything felt so much worse. Blood pounded through his head, the room tilting from side to side for a moment before settling. He wanted to sleep. *So tired.* But he had to get going. Couldn't stay. Couldn't face Jungkook or his roommates.

When he tried to stand up, he nearly fell forward. Caught himself on the coffee table in front of him, panting, heart racing. His sense of balance was off, but he also just felt awful. Wanted to curl up on the couch and sleep there for the rest of the day. Wanted a blanket and a pillow and a nice cup of hot chocolate or some soup.

The snow outside, it was no longer beautiful to him once he was reminded about his predicament. He had to go back out there, wander around until Minwo called him. It could be minutes or it could be days. It all depended on how angry Minwo still was.

He stood up. It took longer than it was supposed to and a lot more effort, but he did it. He stretched his back muscles, then gingerly rubbed at the back of his neck. A sharp pain shot through his neck as soon as he touched the wrong spot, and Jimin hissed.

He couldn't see a bathroom anywhere. Couldn't see a mirror. He didn't want to wander through their house looking for one either, so he listened carefully, making sure no one was awake before he peeled his shirt off, up and over his head.

His skin was a patchwork of broken galaxies, violet and maroon and rose-dusted splotches mixing together to create a tapestry of pain. Being flung off a bed did that to you. And being dragged down hardwood stairs. And kicked.

His arm where Minwo had grabbed him, the bruise was in the shape of a hand. As if a child had gotten black and blue and red paint and slapped it around Jimin's bicep. It was bad. One of the worst bruises Jimin had ever seen on himself. He poked at it, feeling the throbbing ache bruises always carried.

It hurt. Everything fucking hurt. His head, his body, his neck. He sat back down on the couch, running his hands through his hair, threading his fingers through light pink waves. Stayed like that, slouched forward, staring at the floor. He rubbed his hands over his face, his eyes, pinching the bridge of his nose.

His phone was on the floor between his feet, propped up in one of his shoes. It had no calls. Minwo still didn't want him back. Jimin still had nowhere to go. It was snowing outside, he was starving (yesterday had been Friday and Minwo didn't let him eating on Fridays) and he was exhausted.

But he had to leave.

And little did he know, he wasn’t the only one awake.

bruises and muscles and desperation

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all the love so far :)

Jungkook wasn't a morning person, never had been. He was usually a zombie, dragging his feet, eyes puffy and cracked open just enough to see where he was going. So when he woke up and remembered everything that had happened the night before, he groaned, flinging his arm over his eyes.

He didn't want to deal with Jimin. Was honestly hoping Minwo's pink haired lover was gone. He'd said he would be. But there was only one way to find out.

He sat up, combing his hands through his hair to make it stop defying gravity, and rubbed his eyes. Got out of bed, pulling a hoodie on over his bare torso and started making his way downstairs. It was the weekend, so Tae and Jin would be sleeping in for once, and Yoongi wouldn't be up until noon… as usual.

He was almost holding his breath as he made his way down the stairs. He followed the edges of the steps, making sure none of them creaked, his footsteps light. His heart was beating hard in his ears as he got to the bottom, turned, went towards the front room where Jimin might still be.

And what he saw made his eyes widen, made his legs stop moving and his head stop working. Because what he was seeing wasn't meant for his eyes. Knew Jimin wouldn't be sitting there shirtless if he knew someone else was present.

Jimin was slumped forward on the couch, head in his hands. And he was covered in bruises. Purple and blue and pink marred his smooth skin, old ones and new ones that looked like they'd just blossomed. The back of his neck was probably the worst. There was a little yellow splotched around the edges of the black smudge pressed into his skin, harsh purple and red outlining it. It was bad. It was really bad.

He watched as Jimin's hands slipped from holding his face to running through his pink hair, then down the back of his neck to carefully prod at the bruise. He hissed as his fingers ran over the center of it, rocking forward a little at the pain.

And as he moved his arm, Jungkook saw the distinct shape of a large bruise wrapped around his right bicep. Saw that it was a bruise only a hand could make. And Jungkook knew Minwo had left it there.

He wanted to say something. Wanted to confront Jimin about what exactly had happened the night before. But he had a feeling Jimin wasn't the type of person to talk about that stuff with a stranger-almost-enemy.

And it's not your problem; it's his.

So Jungkook waited silently, waited until Jimin finally sighed, rubbing at his face and dragging his hands through his hair one more time before he grabbed his black and white striped shirt, slipping

it on.

As he was pulling his shirt on, Jungkook found himself looking beyond the bruises at something that really surprised him. Jimin had always looked small and defenseless, engulfed in clothes that hung from his frame. But his body was lean and defined, hardened with muscle, so contrary to the image he put out. So out of place with the Jimin he'd met two years ago. It all made him feel weird, a lightness in his stomach swirling up into his head. Still felt weird as Jimin pulled his shirt on, then his jacket.

He waited until Jimin was putting on his shoes before he backtracked into the hall, walking up a few steps quietly before walking back down, making a little more noise than he usually did. He didn't want Jimin to know he'd seen him like that. And by the look Jimin gave him when he walked in, he didn't suspect anything.

Jimin looked flustered, so different from how Jungkook had seen him just moments before. When he'd been sitting there alone, he'd looked so… exhausted. But now that Jungkook was in there, now that Jimin knew he wasn't alone, a mask had slipped over his face, schooling his features.

"I was just leaving," he assured Jungkook quickly, voice raspy and low and stuffy sounding.

Jungkook's eyes travelled to the front window, saw how it was still snowing a little. It must be freezing outside. And as much as Jimin's presence made him uncomfortable… "Do you want a ride home?" Jungkook found himself asking.

Jimin's eyes widened a little before his gaze skirted away from Jungkook's, avoiding him. "I'm not, uh… I'm not going home…"

Jungkook's brow furrowed as he continued walking into the room, making his way to the kitchen. He was trying to act as casual as possible, the images of Jimin's bruised torso burning his mind as he glanced at the shorter young man. Jungkook opened the fridge, eyes scanning the shelves, though his mind was completely focused on Minwo's lover.

"I can give you a ride to wherever you need to go. It's cold out there."

There was a tense pause, as if Jimin was debating on saying something. "No, it's okay. I can walk."

Jungkook shrugged, grabbing a gallon of milk from the fridge, deciding on a bowl of cereal. He got a bowl from one of the cupboards and his heart-healthy cheerios, then started pouring the milk into the empty bowl.

"You pour the milk first?"

Jungkook looked up at Jimin. "Yeah. Why?"

Jimin had an odd expression on his face, one that cracked his somber mood a tiny bit. "That's weird."

Jungkook felt a tiny smile tug at the corner of his mouth. "Are there rules for how a person should eat their cereal?"

Jimin laughed a little, his eyes disappearing into crescents, crinkling in the corners. It was the type of smile that lit up an entire room, dazzling and effortless and completely natural. ~~Just like in the lobby when they'd first met.~~ The laugh turned into a heavy cough, however, had Jimin covering his mouth with blue fuzzy sleeves. Jungkook felt that weirdness in his stomach again and looked away, focusing on his task at hand. "Do you at least want some breakfast?" He asked, his voice

strained.

Jimin shook his head quickly once the coughing subsided, the light in his eyes sputtering out as quickly as it had appeared. And it made Jungkook realize that there *had* been a light in Jimin's eyes, if only for a second… and that there hadn't been before.

"No, I'm not-- I'm not hungry," Jimin muttered, and as soon as he said it his stomach growled.

Jungkook gave Jimin a blank, half-lidded look. "Really?"

Jimin blushed a little, looking back down at the floor. "Well… I just don't-- I mean, I am… but I really need to get going."

"Why are you in such a hurry? Where do you need to go?" Jungkook asked, pouring cereal into the milk.

Jimin's eyes darted around the room, and he was twisting his hands together again, rubbing his palms. "I'm going to…" He was staring at Jungkook, as if searching for an answer in his eyes. "I'm going to the… to the..."

A realization dawned on Jungkook, making him pause, his spoon in his hand. The bruises, the way Jimin had been so desperate for a place to stay, walking through the snow in shorts and a thin jacket. How he was at a loss for words on where he was going…

"You didn't leave last night," Jungkook murmured. "He kicked you out."

Jimin's deep brown eyes were suddenly flooded with panic. His mouth opened and closed, and he was running a hand through his hair, distraught. He was stuttering, words making no sense as they filled the air. Something about how it was his own fault, something about rules…

Minwo had thrown Jimin out during a snowstorm. In *those* clothes. With *nowhere to go*. Jungkook set his spoon down with a harsh clack, vision narrowed solely on Jimin. Jimin flinched, eyes shutting tight, taking a step back. As if he was afraid the maknae would hit him. And even after their meager friendship a few months back had shattered, the thought that Jimin might think Jungkook capable of hitting him made his stomach turn sour.

"He kicked you out," Jungkook breathed, "in the middle of the night... in a snowstorm." He waited until Jimin finally met his gaze before continuing. "Yes or no?"

Jimin looked like hell, the maknae able to see him better now that the room had gotten brighter, the shifting daylight outside streaming in through the window. Jungkook's eyes flashed over Jimin's form, saw the way his eyes were puffy from crying the previous night, how his nose was still red, his face flushed with something other than embarrassment, the occasional sniffle.

"Yes."

It wasn't Jungkook's business, wasn't his place to ask why. So he didn't. He merely stared at Jimin, making the other shift uncomfortably, processing another reason he hated Minwo.

"I should get going," Jimin muttered quickly.

"Where?" Jungkook demanded, a determination in his voice that hadn't been there before.

"Out there," Jimin mumbled, turning towards the door.

“But *where* are you going?”

Jimin shrugged.

“You already said you’re not going back home yet.”

Jimin still didn’t say anything, started walking.

“Park Jimin.”

He hesitated, hand on the door handle. Didn’t look at Jungkook, head lowered in shame. He sniffed, nose sounding stuffy as he wiped at it with the back of his sleeve again.

“You sound sick. You’re hungry. You have nowhere to go. And it’s still snowing,” Jungkook said, listing off the facts. Jimin seemed to shrink with each one, his face burning hotter. “Don’t be a fool. I may not like you, but I don’t want you to die out there.”

“I won’t die,” Jimin argued. “I’ll just… go to a… I’ll go to a store or something.”

Jungkook raised a brow, vaguely noticing his cereal was going soggy. “The nearest store is a couple miles away.”

Jimin’s hands balled into loose fists. “I’ll be fine,” he almost hissed, eyes snapping up to look at Jungkook. “Why does it matter? You hate me anyways. Shouldn’t you be giddy or something about all of this?”

Jungkook was at a loss for words. His mind turned over Jimin’s accusation, thinking it through. He looked down at his bowl of cereal, the sound of the lock turning echoing through the room. His dislike for Jimin was clear; ever since that night in the courthouse, Jungkook had felt nothing but distaste for Minwo's lover. But he would never be *giddy* about someone being in pain. “I’m not a monster,” he whispered.

Jimin flinched again, looking like he was about to say something, when he froze. His eyes traveled over Jungkook’s shoulder, focusing on something behind him. And the maknae was already rolling his eyes.

“Aigoo, you’re leaving already?” A voice asked.

“Hyung, not now,” Jungkook groaned, not ready to deal with Kim Seokjin this morning.

“Usually his one night stands stay a little bit,” Jin laughed, winking at Jimin. Jimin turned as pink as his hair and Jungkook choked on the air in his lungs. “Aish, Jungkookie, you don’t have to hide your *friends* from me. Usually I can hear it anyways-”

“We’re not--”

“He looks a little rough. You two sure went at it--”

Jungkook clapped a hand over Jin’s mouth. “Shut up,” he hissed.

Jin pushed at Jungkook’s hand. “Yah! I’m older than you! You can’t tell me to shut up!”

“Shut up.”

Jin neck sliced Jungkook and the maknae did it right back, and Jungkook’s mood was immediately lifted by his hyung’s ridiculous pettiness. Jin began ranting about all the things he did for

Jungkook and all the money he'd spent on food and the time he'd spent cooking and cleaning up after him, talking so fast and running out of breath so quickly that Jungkook started laughing, forgetting for a moment that Jimin was standing there watching them.

"We're not like that. He just needed a place to stay for the night," Jungkook explained.

Jin shrugged. "Fine." He looked Jimin up and down briefly before walking into the kitchen, busying himself with getting a real breakfast ready. "You look like hell, though. Not saying you're ugly. You just don't look like you're doing too hot right now."

Jimin ran a hand through his pink hair, clearly embarrassed. Jungkook rolled his eyes, wanting to shove his hyung back up to his room so he could finish his talk with Jimin.

Jin put a pan on the stove, turning on the burner as he got the carton of eggs from the fridge, along with a tomato, an onion, some meat, and a few bottles of spices. As he was cracking the eggs into the heated pan, just as Jimin was about to open the front door, he said, "Stay for breakfast or I'll tie you to a chair and shove food down your throat."

Jungkook watched Jimin's mouth drop open at the blatant threat, not sure whether Jin was being serious or not. The maknae sighed, rubbing his face. Too much had happened this morning already. He wanted to go back to bed.

Jimin's hand was frozen on the door knob, and Jungkook realized with a bit of hesitation that there was no use arguing with Jin, that Jimin would be staying a little longer. "You'd better stay. He'll do it."

Jin pointed his spatula at one of the chairs around the table. "Sit," he commanded. "Let hyung feed you."

Jimin sighed, pulling out a small black flip phone from his pocket, checking it. Something like disappointment flashed across his face when he saw what he'd needed to see, and he slipped it back into his pocket. "Are you sure?"

"Yah!" Jin started, turning around to look at Jimin. "You look too skinny to be refusing my food, and I'm not going to take no for an answer. If you don't eat I'll be really offended and I'll never let Jungkookie invite you over again--"

"Hyung," Jungkook groaned, exasperated.

"Punk, don't interrupt me. I'm your hyung, you little brat," Jin huffed. "Now, what's your name?"

Jimin was staring down at the counter top, the flush gone from his face by now, his skin looking pallid and clammy. "Jimin," he muttered, eyes flicking over to Jungkook.

But Jin didn't react to the name, didn't seem to recognize it at all. Jimin wasn't a rare name in Seoul, so it wasn't likely that it would be Park Jimin standing in their living room, if Jin even remembered who that might be. Jin hummed, turning back to the frying pan, flipping an omelette. The pan sizzled, filling the air with a savory aroma that made Jungkook's mouth water.

"How'd you two kids meet?" Jin asked, still focused on cooking.

Jungkook looked at Jimin, both of them at a loss for words. He didn't know if he should tell Jin that this was Minwo's secret lover and that they definitely weren't friends, but Jimin began speaking before he could decide.

“I visited GCF a few times.”

Jungkook cocked his head to the side. It was a thin film over a long, strange history. And that reminder made Jungkook’s eyes darken as he studied the pink haired young man sitting on a chair in his kitchen.

Minwo’s lover seemed innocent enough, but Jungkook was forgetting what kind of person Jimin had to be to date a man like that. Minwo was a manipulative asshole, always scheming, always backbiting. Jimin must be just as bad or worse, especially since he'd lied to Jungkook for a year and a half.

“You know, Jungkookie dyed his hair pink a little while ago.” Jin set an omelette and rice in front of Jimin, handing him some chopsticks.

Jimin’s hand subtly moved below the counter to clutch his stomach. Jungkook wasn’t sure if he was sick or hungry, but he didn’t look too good. “Thank you,” Jimin said, not commenting on Jungkook’s pink hair thing.

“It was just a few streaks. It’s not like I bleached my hair and dumped cotton candy on it like he did,” Jungkook argued.

Jin pointed his threatening spatula at Jungkook this time. “He looks way better in pink than you ever did, brat.”

Jungkook scoffed, rolling his eyes, looking down at his phone. Jimin *did* look good in pink; he looked really fucking good, but Jungkook was going to be the last person to admit that out loud... Even though he’d practically checked him out this morning.

That reminded him.

“What’s that on your neck?” Jungkook asked, knowing full well what it was. There was only a tiny sliver of exposed skin, so small nobody would’ve noticed it if they hadn’t known it was there. It was a low blow he didn’t feel bad about.

The shift in Jimin’s demeanor was immediate. He stiffened, hand going right to where the bruise was, pulling his collar up to hide it better. “What?”

Jungkook nodded to where Jimin’s hand rested on his neck. “It looks like a bruise.”

Jimin’s eyes were wide, looking from Jungkook to Jin, who was looking over his shoulder at him. “It’s nothing.”

Jungkook took a few steps towards Jimin. “No, really, I thought I saw something. It looked bad.”

Jimin shook his head. “It’s nothing,” he insisted again, a warning in his voice.

“I just want to make sure-”

“Yah, you brat, stop pestering Jiminie,” Jin reprimanded.

Jungkook’s eyes snapped over to Jin. “I’m not pestering him, I’m just curious.”

“Jiminie?” A new voice asked, a sleepy Tae dragging his feet into the kitchen. “Who’s ‘Jiminie?’”

With the addition of another person in the room, Jimin seemed to shrink into himself even more. Jungkook watched as Jimin rubbed his hands together, licking his lips, his legs bouncing

nervously. “I should really go,” Jimin said, standing from the chair, omelette barely touched.

Jin was about to snap at him to sit back down and eat, but Jungkook cut him off. He slung his arm around Tae’s neck. “This is Jimin. Have you met him before?”

Jungkook knew Jimin might remember who Tae was.

Tae’s eyes went hazy for a second, trying to recall where he might have seen Jimin. But his gaze remained blank, no recognition sparking whatsoever.

“Why would Taehyungie know him? *I* just met him. Are you two hanging out with other people and not telling me?” Jin asked, clearly offended.

“Are you our mother, hyung?” Tae asked. Jin glared at him, about to say something, but Tae cut him off. “Stop talking. Dead skin cells are coming out of your mouth.”

Jin’s mouth dropped open, and Jungkook could see the rant energy building up in his oldest hyung's chest.

“Punk! That’s too harsh! What makes you think you can talk to me like that? I’m older than you and I cook for you all the time! Do you know how much grief you cause me? Do you know how much I’ve done to keep you well fed? You little brat! Every time--”

Jungkook zoned out as Tae burst out laughing and Jin ranted harder at him, the spatula quickly gaining potential as a future weapon. The maknae couldn’t keep the smile from his face as he watched them argue. His gaze drifted over to Jimin, who was hovering near the front door again, looking desperately like he wanted to leave and never come back.

But there was an ache in his eyes, an ache Jungkook hadn’t expected to be there. He looked exhausted and worn out and thread bare, at the end of his rope. But there was a yearning there; a yearning for what, Jungkook didn’t know.

Jimin was clutching that little flip phone like a lifeline, looking down at it anxiously every few seconds. It made Jungkook wonder if he was expecting a call or text from Minwo.

Minwo’s lover. Your enemy.

Bruises and muscles and desperation-- what a strange person he was. To put up with Minwo like that but then crawl right back to him like a kicked puppy.

“At least let me give you a ride,” Jungkook offered.

Tae stepped up to Jungkook’s side, his eyes narrowing a little. “Jimin? Where do I know you from?”

Jimin was looking worse by the second. His hands had a slight tremble to them, sweat beading across his brow. He was still sniffling, sounding stuffy, and his voice was still raspy compared to what Jungkook had heard last night. Jungkook watched as Jimin shrugged weakly. “I don’t know…”

And Jungkook suddenly didn’t want them to know who Jimin was. If Yoongi’s reaction from the previous night was anything to go by, it would only make things harder for him. He had made a mistake pointing Jimin out to Tae.

“I actually don’t think I’ve ever introduced you two,” Jungkook said quickly.

Jimin's gaze snapped to Jungkook's, suspicious.

"How old are you?" Tae asked.

"I was born in '95," Jimin answered.

Shock zagged down Jungkook's back, his mind going blank. "You're two years older than me?"

Jimin blinked at him. "I am?"

Tae was a little more excited than he should have been. "We're the same age," he said to Jimin.

Jin sighed. "Wah, I'm always the oldest. Why can't there ever be someone my age?"

"You live with a bunch of dongsaengs. What do you expect?" Tae asked.

Jungkook couldn't stop staring at Jimin. "I thought we were the same age."

"Me too," Jimin admitted.

Jungkook realized this meant he'd been talking informally, that he would have to use more respect around Jimin. But the idea of showing any form of respect to someone so close to Minwo made him want to gag. "I'm not using honorifics," Jungkook said.

Jimin's nose crinkled as he gave Jungkook a half-hearted scowl. "I'm older than you."

Jungkook shook his head, irritation pooling in his chest. "That doesn't mean I respect you-"

"Aish, I thought you two were friends. How did you not know he was older than you, Jungkookie?" Tae asked.

Jungkook reached a hand up, rubbing the back of his neck. "We never talked about it."

Neither Tae nor Jin looked convinced, but they were both cut off by Jimin's hand suddenly cupping his mouth, his eyes shutting tight. He swallowed hard, sweat shimmering on his pallid brow.

"Are you okay?" Tae asked.

Jimin shook his head.

"You look like you're about to puke," Jin commented, already grabbing for the kitchen trash can.

Jimin only nodded, not daring to say anything.

"There's a bathroom down the hall," Tae said, pointing in the direction of the bathroom.

Jimin made it to the bathroom just in time to hurl his guts up.

the kindest masks

Chapter Notes

> Thank you so much for all the kudos and comments! Really, you're awesome :) I was originally not even gonna post this story and was only writing it for myself, so it's really encouraging to see so much love. I've been working on this story for about 3 months (haha yeahh...) and you don't know how hard it is for me not to just post what I have all at once. Anyways, enjoy :)

Jungkook stood just outside the door, awkwardly lingering in case Jimin needed something. He watched as Jimin's hands gripped the sides of the toilet, throwing up the one bite of omelette he'd eaten, and then dry heaving. And dry heaving. And more dry heaving.

Jimin panted, eyes closed tight as a single tear slipped down his cheek. He gagged one more time, setting off another round of heaving before he sat back against the wall, head tipped back, tears streaming down his face.

Jungkook watched. He wanted to offer to get Jimin water or something, wanted to ask him if he was alright, but something kept the words from leaving his mouth. Most people would've left, would've gotten grossed out and not watched or stayed, but Jungkook didn't pay any mind to the toilet as he awkwardly stepped into the bathroom. Knelt next to Jimin.

Jimin turned his head away from Jungkook, eyes still closed. He pulled his knees up to his chest, wrapping his arms around his legs. Jerked in pain a little at the position, but smoothed out his features quickly.

Jungkook gingerly rested his hand on Jimin's thin shoulder. "Are you…" He trailed off, watching the tears that continued to soak Jimin's cheeks. "You're not okay."

Jimin tried to shrug Jungkook's hand off his shoulder, but the action was so weak it accomplished nothing. So Minwo's pink haired lover rested his forehead on his arms instead, hiding his face from Jungkook's gaze. The position exposed the back of his neck. The massive bruise.

Jungkook's hand still rested on Jimin's shoulder.

"I'm sorry. This is-- this is so stupid," Jimin's muffled voice mumbled.

"You can stay," Jungkook found himself saying.

Jimin shook his head from where it rested on his knees. "No… I don't want… I don't want to be a burden."

"You're sick from walking through a snow storm last night and you've got a bruise on the back of your neck that doesn't look too good either." Jungkook still didn't mention that he'd seen Jimin shirtless, seen all the bruises that mapped his body. "You don't have to pretend everything's fine. You wouldn't have asked to stay the night if everything was fine."

Jimin went silent, body trembling a little. When his head finally lifted, he sniffled, his eyes dazed. The pallid sheen to his skin had been replaced with a slow flush of pink, and Jungkook reached

forward, ignoring Jimin's flinch, and pressed the back of his hand to the elder's brow.

"And you've got a fever."

Jimin pushed Jungkook's hand away, pressing himself back into the wall. "I…" He swallowed hard before his eyes suddenly widened. Jungkook quickly pulled away, giving Jimin space.

When Jimin was done heaving, he ran a hand through his hair, sitting back against the wall. But this time, he stared at Jungkook. "Do they know who I am?"

Jungkook's chest flared with anger. His hands clenched into fists, Minwo's face flashing through his mind. "They know *of* you. But if you're asking if they know you're Minwo's lover, then no, they don't recognize you."

Jimin's face flushed with even more pink and he ran his hand through his hair again. It made Jungkook want to snap at him, ask why he did that so much. Why he couldn't stop touching his hair. But he held his tongue.

"Why didn't you tell them who I was?" Jimin murmured, so quietly the maknae was barely able to hear him.

Jungkook crossed his arms over his chest. "Do you *want* me to tell them who you are? I assumed since you didn't tell me for a year and a half that you weren't too keen on letting them know."

Jimin held his gaze for a few seconds longer before exhaustion tugged his body down like he was a broken marionette doll. He held his head in his hands, his eyes drooping and dark. "Tell them whatever you want," he whispered.

Jungkook sighed, glancing over Jimin's weak form. "Stay," he said.

Jimin was full of protests, even with as sick as he was.

"Stay," Jungkook insisted again.

Jimin was shaking his head.

"You're sick. You can rest on our couch. I'll get you a blanket and pillow this time. Wandering around in the snow for another, what, few days? It's going to make it worse."

"But your hyungs..."

"They have people that crash here all the time."

Jimin sighed, tipping his head back against the wall again, staring up at the ceiling. "I thought you hated me."

"Doesn't mean I can't help you."

A pause. "Are you sure? I can stay?"

Jungkook groaned. "How many times are you going to ask that?"

Surprisingly, a smile tugged at Jimin's lips. "I can ask again if it'll piss you off more," he teased weakly.

Jungkook scoffed softly, a smile appearing on his own face, much to his own chagrin. He shook

his head before holding out his hand to help Jimin up. Jimin looked at his hand for a moment before accepting it.

Jimin was shorter than him, but not by a lot. He was just smaller in general, and Jungkook had always known that... but they'd never been this close. Jungkook's eyes scanned Jimin's flushed face, his warm brown eyes framed by dark lashes, the tiny moles dotting his forehead. Gaze wandered down to his plump lips for a split second. *Minwo's lover.* He took a step away from Jimin.

"I'll tell them you're staying for a bit."

Jimin was looking down at the floor. "Thank you."

Jungkook didn't say anything more, walking away to round up a spare pillow and blanket.

Jimin had followed Jungkook only five steps out of the bathroom before the urge to puke hit him again. So he spent twenty more minutes in the bathroom dry heaving. Sat on the tile floor, head against the wall, occasionally making for the toilet even though he knew nothing would come up.

This whole situation was humiliating. It would've been different if he was staying with someone who actually liked him, but because he literally had no one, he was forced to stay with his boyfriend's enemy. Was now in Jungkook's bathroom sweating like a pig, panting, about to pass out.

He had tried to hold it back for as long as possible, fighting the nausea that had crept up the back of his throat as Jin had set the omelette in front of him. He had been starving just before that, but as soon as the smell had hit him, all hunger had vanished and he'd just wanted to puke.

He lightly thumped his head back against the wall in a muted frustration. He didn't want to be sick. Didn't have the energy for it. The patience. He just wanted Minwo to call him already and tell him he could come home.

The last time he'd been kicked out had been a few months prior, and Jimin had wandered the streets for four days before Minwo had called him. And that had been over Jimin not wanting to have sex with him. If Minwo thought he was cheating on him with his enemy, Jimin was sure his boyfriend wouldn't be calling for at least a week.

Still, he checked his phone every couple minutes. If he didn't answer by the second ring, Minwo wouldn't call back for even longer and wouldn't return any of Jimin's calls. So he clutched the phone to his chest, even as he began drifting off, head lolling back against the wall.

"Hey." It was a soft murmur that was almost inaudible to Jimin's cotton-stuffed ears. Then a hand was on his shoulder, gently shaking him awake. Jungkook somehow managed to get Jimin to stand up, guiding him out to the couch where there was a blanket and pillow and bowl.

He was so out of it by then that he'd almost burst out crying at the kindness. He wasn't used to it, the gentleness with which Jungkook handled him, even though the younger hated him. And it hurt him even more to realize Jungkook probably didn't have a mean bone in his body, despite all the nasty things Minwo had said about him, the terrible things he'd supposedly done.

But Jimin didn't cry, only collapsed on the couch, all energy gone. Drained. He felt so drained. But before he could fall asleep, hands were tugging off his jacket and shoes, covering him with a

blanket, putting a pillow beneath his head.

He was asleep before he could realize Jungkook had tucked him in.

"Like this," Hoseok instructed them. *"Ba ba ba ba, ba ba, pah pah pah pah,"* he sounded out as he showed them step by step how the choreography was supposed to go.

Taehyung groaned and Jungkook followed Hobi's steps one by one, over and over again, the sound of *ba's* and *pah's* filling the room. They had been at it for a few hours, and yet Jungkook felt like he was getting nowhere.

Thankfully, he'd mostly been able to get Jimin out of his head during practice, focusing on dancing and nothing else. It was his release. That and singing. His only two releases now, his only two passions. When he'd still been the active CEO of Golden Closet Films, he'd also done a lot of photography. But he hadn't been able to pick up his camera since Minwo had stuck a knife in his back. Since he'd been framed for a crime he hadn't committed.

So he danced. He danced and he sang until he collapsed. Distraction, that's all he had. A good distraction, though.

He was part of Hoseok-hyung's dance crew called *Hope on the Street,* and it paid okay. He couldn't get an actual job as he was being investigated for aggravated assault and criminal battery… but he was a millionaire still, was still getting checks for paid leave while the legal teams battled it out. But he barely touched the money he'd earned as CEO, didn't want to until he got his company back. Until he found a way to show that Minwo was the guilty one and not himself.

"What's wrong, Jungkookie?" Hoseok asked.

Jungkook shrugged, giving up on the choreography for now. Stood there panting, drenched in sweat, his muscles buzzing with energy. He sighed, shaking his head. "It's just been a weird day, hyung."

"What happened?" Hoseok asked. "What happened to my little Jungkookie?"

Jungkook whined in annoyance as Hobi wrapped his arms around his waist, picking him up and squeezing him. Jungkook swatted at his arms a couple times before the elder dancer finally relented, setting him down.

"Hyung, don't do that. I'm not a kid anymore," Jungkook pouted.

Hobi pinched his cheeks. "You'll always be my little Jungkookie."

Jungkook pushed his hyung's hands away from his face. He pulled up his shirt, showing off his abs, his sculpted torso. "Does this look like the body of a kid?"

Hoseok burst out laughing, doubling over. "Jungkook-ah, you're really too much sometimes." He wiped the moisture from the corners of his eyes, concern slowly replacing the amusement. "But actually, what's going on? You're usually not this frustrated during practice."

Jungkook shrugged, hands resting on his hips. He looked down at the floor, rubbing the toe of his shoe into a dark streak. "Hyung… have you ever hated someone?"

“Why would you ask a question like that?”

Jungkook glanced at himself in the mirror wall. His hair was damp with sweat, his face a little flushed, his bare arms flexing subconsciously, tensing. “There’s this… person… that I really hate--”

“Kim Minwo?”

Jungkook hesitated before nodding. “Last night… last night, someone close to him contacted me asking for help. Minwo’s a monster, hyung, and I just really-- I don’t know, I’m having a hard time tolerating this person.”

“Why would they ask you for help?” Hoseok asked, voice dropping lower, so low Jungkook could barely hear him.

The maknae shrugged his shoulders. “He was in a bad situation and needed somewhere to stay.”

“Aigoo, that’s my little Jungkookie. Always being so nice to everyone,” Hoseok reached over, ruffling the younger’s hair. His hand lingered on the back of Jungkook’s neck, an affectionate touch that Jungkook had taken a while to warm up to when they’d first met. “Are they a bad person as well?”

Jungkook thought about it, really thought. So far Jimin didn’t seem too bad. In fact, he seemed kind of harmless, always had. Even when they’d met two years prior. But if Jungkook had learned anything in the last year, it was that the people with the kindest masks always had the cruelest hearts. And Jimin had fallen for Minwo, was his secret lover only a handful of people knew about… and only monsters could love other monsters.

“I don’t know,” Jungkook finally admitted. “He seems innocent enough, but I thought that about Minwo, too.” He shook his head, frustrated. “And he’s sick, hyung. I only agreed to one night, and now it seems like he’ll be at the apartment for another few days. He just… agitates me. Reminds me of Minwo every time I see him.”

“Then kick him out if you really don’t like him,” Hoseok advised, bending down and grabbing his water bottle from the floor. He unscrewed the cap and tilted his head back, chugging half the bottle in one go.

Jungkook shook his head. “I offered to let him stay… And besides, I don’t think Jin-hyung would let me kick him out. They only spoke like two words to each other and Jin-hyung started making him breakfast. He never makes breakfast for *me* anymore.”

“Now it just sounds like you’re jealous,” Hoseok laughed. “If you want, *I* can make you breakfast.”

Jungkook cocked his head to the side, looking up at the ceiling, trying to think of something to say to that. Jealous? Maybe a little. He knew he got jealous easily, couldn’t help himself when it came to those closest to him. So when he couldn’t think of a denial, he relented with a sigh and started stretching his arms. “I don’t like him at all.”

“Then ignore him. Make Jin deal with him.”

Jungkook’s hands clenched into fists as he stretched his arms behind his head. “I hate this guy even being in my house. The more I think about it, the more I feel like he’s going to hurt my hyungs.”

~~Hurt them like he hurt me.~~

“Then just kick him out.”

Jungkook groaned in exasperation. He closed his eyes tight, tipping his head back, arms limp at his sides. “I can’t.” There was a long pause after those words, long enough that Jungkook finally opened his eyes, looking at his hyung. “I hate him but I can’t.”

Hoseok was standing there holding the water bottle. His expression was stricken, full of a grief the maknae never would have imagined seeing, hadn’t seen in months. “Not everyone is like Minwo, Jungkook-ah,” Hoseok murmured. He took a step closer, reached up and smoothing his thumb over Jungkook’s ear, playing with his piercing. “I’m proud of you for helping someone who needs it, even if you hate them and the people they associate with. That takes a lot of strength, and I know I wouldn’t be able to do what you did. You’re a good kid, Jungkookie. Your hyungs have raised you well.”

Jungkook nodded, looking down at the streaked floor. “I’m sure you would’ve done it, too.”

Hoseok shook his head, that overwhelming grief coating the air between them-- thick as honey, dark as tar. “I wouldn’t.”

Jungkook wrapped his fingers around Hoseok’s wrist. “Why do you say that?”

Hoseok sighed, shaking his head. “You asked me just now if I’ve ever hated someone... I have. *I do.* I hate a person I don’t even know the name of, a person I’ve never even met.” He closed his eyes, all of the sunshine and cheer and hope draining from him. “You *know* the person you hate and you still chose to help.”

Jungkook couldn’t find it in himself to believe his hyung actually hated someone. Their dance group was called “Hope on the Street,” a name Hoseok had chosen. He had always taught Jungkook about loving and accepting others, about spreading happiness and not anger. Had helped Jungkook more than he could ever put into words.

“Is this about your old roommate?” Jungkook asked, thinking back to a little over a year ago. It had been a dark time for both himself and his hyung. That’d been when the whole assault case had happened, and something had happened with Hoseok’s roommate only a little bit later… but Hoseok hadn’t really wanted to talk about it. It had been hard to watch his hyung struggle, hurting over whatever had happened with his roommate. It was like his hyung’s heart had been ripped out and crushed, laid bare for everyone to see how damaged he was.

But every time Jungkook had asked about what had happened, Hoseok had refused to talk about it, wouldn’t even mention names. Wouldn’t say who it was or who had hurt him or why. Just said it was something to do with his now ex-roommate.

“It doesn’t matter, Jungkook-ah. Not anymore. It was a while ago.” He looked crestfallen, then. Absolutely crushed by whatever memory had been dredged up from the depths of his mind.

Jungkook patted Hoseok’s shoulder. “I don’t like seeing you sad, hyung. That hurts me, too.”

Hoseok gave Jungkook a weary smile before reaching up to pinch the maknae’s cheek. Jungkook dodged the pinch, slapping his arm away, only to be wrapped up in Hobi’s crushing embrace.

“You really have grown up well,” he said.

Jungkook didn’t say anything to that.

the games we play

Chapter Notes

Okay I couldn't help myself... here's another chapter.

When Jungkook got home, he almost thought he was hallucinating. He hadn't had dinner yet, hadn't eaten since lunch, and his muscles were sore from a tough day of practice. So he thought all of those things might mean what he saw wasn't real. But it was.

Jimin was sleeping on Jin's lap, a blanket over his curled form. His pink hair was mussed to the side, Jin running his hands through the thick locks, restarting one of his video games.

"Hyung?" Jungkook asked, jealousy panging through him.

Jin glanced over his shoulder, looking back at the maknae. "Aigoo, Jungkook-ah," he whisper-yelled. He was still in his pajamas, his hair messy, used plates and bowls and tissues on the coffee table in front of him.

"What are you doing?" Jungkook asked.

"What are you doing, hyungnim," Jin corrected.

Jungkook wasn't in the mood, so he walked closer to the couch to see the pair better. "Why is he sleeping on your lap?"

Jin combed his fingers through Jimin's hair one last time before he started a new game, holding the controller with both hands. It looked so natural, the way he was letting Jimin sleep on him, playing video games, relaxing.

"Is your hyung not allowed to take care of your friends?" Jin asked, focused entirely on the TV screen in front of him.

"You only met him this morning."

"He's sick," Jin commented, as if that alone explained everything. He was shaking the controller and tilting it to the side, his car on the screen spinning off the track as another player crashed into him.

"What have you two been doing all day?"

Jin didn't answer for a moment, tilting his controller from side to side, dodging other players and firing a weapon at the car in front of him. "I've been playing video games. He's mostly been asleep."

"On your lap?"

"I don't have to explain myself to you," Jin snapped, crossing the finish line in 7th place. He groaned before immediately going to restart the game. Jungkook snatched the controller from his hands before he could, and Jin cried out in protest, grabbing for it. "Aish, what's wrong with you

today? You're being a brat."

"You don't even know him. Why is he sleeping on your lap?" Jungkook asked again.

"Jeonlous," Jin muttered. He ran his hand through Jimin's pink locks again, but without having noticed he'd done it. Only realized when Jungkook's gaze sharpened, falling to that traitorous hand. "You said you two weren't like that, but you're acting awfully jealous for someone who's just a friend," Jin said, a grin stretching across his mouth. "You know you don't have to hide this stuff from me, Jungkookie."

"He's just a guy I know that needed a place to stay for the night," Jungkook stressed, knowing he shouldn't be so jealous. "That doesn't mean you should let him sleep on you."

"Yah, so jealous. My dongsaengs are always so clingy."

"Hyung~"

"Jiminie's just a little cutie that needs attention," Jin stated, smiling down at Minwo's lover.

"Cutie?" Jungkook asked, brow furrowing, frown tugging at his mouth.

Jin grinned. "Yah, he was pretty out of it the few times he did wake up. He just kinda cuddled on my lap, but he's been sleeping so soundly I didn't have the heart to wake him up or move him."

Jungkook glared down at them. He wanted to snap at Jin, tell him who Jimin really was. But something held him back. Maybe it was the memory of Jimin's beat up body, or how he'd walked miles through a snowstorm because he'd been kicked out. Or maybe it was pity. Jungkook pitied him, even though he was Minwo's lover. Jimin didn't deserve Jungkook's kindness, didn't even deserve his pity, and yet he somehow had both at the moment.

Jungkook sighed, finally relenting. "How's he doing?" He asked begrudgingly.

Jin stole the controller back from the maknae, throwing him a sharp glare before turning back to the TV, starting a new game. "I've been shoving water down his throat every few hours, and I fed him a little bit of soup an hour ago that he still hasn't puked up, so I think he's doing a little better."

Jungkook looked at all the used dishes on the table, walking around the couch to get to them. He gathered them up, trying to keep his hot blood from boiling. He took the dishes to the sink and loaded them into the dishwasher, the sound of Jin's video game filling the otherwise silent room.

Just as he was finishing up, his phone vibrated in his pocket. He washed his hands, quickly drying them off on his pants before pulling it out. It was Hayoon.

Want to come over?

Jungkook looked up, cocking his head to the side as he thought. He knew if he went over they'd hook up. He didn't know if he was in the mood for that tonight. It had been a long day, and he was honestly feeling pretty frustrated, especially with Jimin still sleeping on his couch. On *his* hyung.

His gaze shifted to where Jimin was still sleeping on Jin's lap, looking like he belonged there, like they'd been friends for years. He *was* sleeping soundly, his breaths a little heavy, still congested. His hair was messy, his face flushed, the tip of his nose red. The light from the TV smoothed over his skin, the dark circles beneath his eyes lighter than they had been that morning, his long lashes fluttering with sleep. There was something beautiful in that scene, something Jungkook wanted to capture with a camera… but he didn't photograph anymore. Not since Minwo.

Just a little cutie that needs attention.

Jungkook huffed, looking back down at his phone. He couldn't decide yet, so he slipped his phone in his pocket, making his way up to his room, knowing he needed to put some space between himself and Minwo's lover.

When he opened the door to his room, he wasn't surprised to see Yoongi and Tae on his bed. Yoongi was listening to music, laptop resting on his crossed legs, hood up and feline eyes focused. Tae was leaning against the headboard, a comic in his hands, eyes scanning the page as he read.

"Aish, why are my hyungs always in my room?" Jungkook muttered to himself, a smile cracking across his face anyways.

Tae had left the studio a lot earlier than Jungkook had, and by the looks of it he was already showered and ready for bed. Was wearing a set of silk pajamas, a bandana keeping his hair out of his face, some sort of face cream soaking into his skin.

Jungkook didn't say anything, only wandered over to the 95'er and plopped down next to him, resting his head on Tae's thigh. Tae brushed a hand through Jungkook's hair, still focused on the comic in his other hand. "You got home late," he commented distantly.

Jungkook shrugged, closing his eyes, suddenly feeling very tired. Maybe he wouldn't go to Hayoon's tonight. "I was talking to Hoseok-hyung." Yoongi's head turned ever so slightly towards Jungkook upon hearing that name, and the maknae grinned. "He was showing me more of our choreo. He's awesome, you know?"

Tae looked down at Jungkook, smiling. "Yah, Hobi-hyung is the best." Tae's gaze shifted to Yoongi, their hyung's shoulders tensing, his hands frozen on his laptop keyboard.

"He's been working out lately," Jungkook said, all too innocent. "He's been asking me for advice on his abs."

"Aigoo, his abs are nice, aren't they Jungkook-ssi?" Tae asked.

Both of Yoongi's dongsaengs were sporting mischievous grins, watching the back of their hyung's head intently. It was no secret that Yoongi'd had a massive crush on their dance leader for a couple years now. It wasn't something you'd think would work, Hoseok being one of the loudest, brightest people Jungkook knew, Yoongi overall reminding the maknae of the color grey, both in energy and attitude. But if Yoongi's search history was anything to go by, he had it for Hoseok *bad.*

jung hoseok thighs

jung hoseok dance compilation

jung hoseok abs

Jungkook grinned his bunny grin as he remembered the afternoon he'd seen Yoongi's recent searches, the way his hyung had turned bright red, completely flustered. It still made Jungkook laugh.

"Of course Hobi-hyung has nice abs," Jungkook said.

Yoongi sighed, finally turning around to glare at them. "Will you two be quiet? I'm trying to do my work."

Jungkook and Tae snickered together before finally shutting up, though that didn't stop Tae from waggling his eyebrows at Yoongi, who turned away with an irritated hum. Tae tried to move, complaining of his leg going numb, but Jungkook smacked Tae's thigh when the elder tried to shift away, forcing him to stay put.

"Aish, let me move, Jungkook-ah," Tae complained. He swatted the top of Jungkook's head with his comic. Jungkook rolled his eyes before finally sitting up, scooting up next to Tae, settling beside him. The room was silent after that, the faint whisper of Yoongi's music drifting from his headphones, the rustle of a turned page every now and then coming from Tae's comic.

"Why does Jin-hyung like Jimin so much?" Jungkook asked out of the blue.

Tae sighed, turning the page. "Don't worry about it. Jin-hyung's not into guys."

"I know, I know," Jungkook snapped. "I just… did you see them down there? Jimin's sleeping on his lap."

Tae nodded slowly, still focused on his comic, not concerned at all. "Jin-hyung was showing him how to play his video games earlier, too."

Jungkook's jaw clenched in irritation, and he looked around the room. *Just a little cutie that needs attention.* "Why is hyung acting like that?"

Tae hummed, not answering for a moment, turning the page. "Jungkook-ah, you're acting jealous again. He's *your* friend. Why does it matter?"

Because that "friend" was Minwo's lover. Because he was probably a manipulative spy trying to find out Jungkook's weaknesses. Would probably run back home after all of this and fuck Minwo while moaning out everything that had happened and how to use it against the maknae. How to finalize the loss of his company, putting it solely into Minwo's hands.

But the bruises… the way Jimin had clutched the toilet as he dry heaved, shaking and sweaty, pale and weak. How he'd kept trying to leave before it had all happened, his admission of being kicked out during a snowstorm. It didn't seem like Jimin was acting. Those bruises were real. The sickness was real. And the sobbing the night before when Jungkook had turned off the lights and started walking away… the tears were real, too.

But Minwo had been real, too. The late night talks and coffee runs. The laughs, the selcas, the friendship. The way he'd offered Jungkook so much advice, acted so kindly, helped him in so many ways. And then to betray him so cruelly, so efficiently, so coldly. Jimin was Minwo's *lover.* And if the past was anything to go by, Jungkook couldn't allow Jimin to stay too much longer.

"Jungkook-ah, you're zoned out again," Tae complained, bumping their shoulders together.

Jungkook rubbed the back of his neck. "Sorry, hyung."

"You've been acting strange today," Tae said, closing the comic book and looking at the younger.

Jungkook shrugged. "There's been a lot on my mind."

"And it has nothing to do with your friend? Or this jealousy?" Tae raised an eyebrow, seeing right through Jungkook's words. "For him being your friend, you sure act like you don't like him very much."

Jungkook sighed, rubbing his hands together. "I don't know him very well."

“That doesn’t explain all the glares.”

“What glares?” Jungkook asked.

“Every time you look at him, you start glaring. Or when you were focused today, you started glaring then, too. Especially during practice. Hoseok-hyung was really concerned about you and pulled me aside to ask if anything was wrong.”

“He did?” Jungkook’s brows lowered, eyes a little wide.

“We’re not blind, Jungkookie. We know you well. We can tell when you’re upset,” Tae said. “What’s going on?”

Jungkook hung his head, not able to look Tae in the eye. Noticed how Yoongi had one earbud out now, still doing stuff on his laptop, but obviously listening in on the conversation.

“I don’t know,” Jungkook murmured. “I’m the one who said he could stay. I should’ve just told him no.”

Tae shrugged. “He’s seems nice, though. We talked to him earlier and he’s really funny. And he’s another 95-liner.”

Jungkook glared at Tae. “You too?”

“Jeonlous,” Tae sang with a smirk, poking Jungkook’s side.

Jungkook groaned, wanting so desperately to tell Tae who Jimin was. But again, as with Jin, something kept his mouth shut. Probably the pity. And Yoongi was looking at him, eyes glinting with a warning. A warning not to do or say something stupid. A warning not to cause more hurt than there already was.

The others may not have recognized Jimin for who he was, but Yoongi had, probably because Jungkook had only ever talked in depth to him about Minwo’s lover. Now that he thought about it, he didn’t think he’d actually ever told anybody else Jimin’s name.

~~He’d felt too hurt, too betrayed.~~

His phone vibrated with another text message, cutting Jungkook off from saying anything. Tae had gone back to reading his comic and Yoongi had turned back to his laptop, so Jungkook turned on his phone.

come on at least answer me :(

Jungkook hesitated before swiping the message from Hayoon away. He still wasn’t sure. Part of him wanted to take out his frustrations that way, wanted to go rough tonight. But the other part of him wanted to stay and keep an eye on Jimin, wanted to stop any sort of betrayal in its tracks.

There was a knock on the door, a quiet knock that definitely didn’t belong to Jin. Jin would’ve just come in. Any of them would. His hyungs didn’t really bother with privacy, much to the maknae’s annoyance sometimes. So that meant it could be only one person.

Jungkook quickly got up from the bed, Tae staring at him and Yoongi not noticing anything above the sound of his music. He walked to the door, opening it just as Jimin was getting ready to knock again. The maknae slipped out, shutting the door behind him, Jimin taking a step back to give him space.

Jimin looked so small standing there in the dimness of the hall, blanket wrapped around his shoulders, hair messy from Jin running his hands through it all day. He looked well rested, the flush to his cheeks a little calmer than it had been even an hour ago when Jungkook had gotten home, eyes and lips puffy with sleepiness.

“I-- Sorry, Jin-hyung said you’d be up here,” Jimin mumbled. He ran a hand through his messy hair, smoothing down the pink waves as he shifted the blanket around his shoulders, pulling it tighter around himself.

“Hyung?” Jungkook questioned, eyes narrowing. “Why are you calling him ‘hyung?’”

Jimin licked his lips, eyes falling to the floor. “He told me to call him that. Is there something wrong?”

Jungkook shoved his hands into his hoodie pocket, his feet subconsciously planting wider into a defensive stance, his posture rigid. He looked down at Jimin, his blood boiling as his voice dropped low enough for only Jimin to hear. “What game are you playing?”

Jimin blinked, confusion dulling his gaze. “What?”

“Whatever game you’re playing, just stop it. Stop trying to win everyone over. Stop messing with *my* hyungs. I know you’re sick, and I saw that bruise on the back of your neck, so I know you’re not faking anything. But that doesn’t change the fact that you’re Minwo’s *lover.* Whatever your goal is here, just stop.”

Jimin flinched, taking a step back, shrinking in on himself. “I’m not playing any games. I don’t know-- I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Jungkook took a step closer to Jimin, cornering him against the wall. “Sleeping on Jin’s lap all day? Playing video games with him? Talking to Tae and Yoongi? What are you doing?”

“What-”

“Are you here as Minwo’s spy? Trying to-”

“No, I’m not-”

“-sabotage me?”

“I wouldn’t-”

“Because it’s not-”

“I’m not doing any-”

“-going to work.”

Their harsh whispers were hissed back and forth until Jungkook took another step towards Jimin. Neither of them really noticed Yoongi slipping out into the hall behind them, watching quietly.

“You’re fucking around with me again.”

Jimin stepped back, head turning to the side as if he could disappear into the paint, his breaths coming out in ragged pants, eyes shutting tight. “I’m not doing anything,” he gasped. “I’ll leave. I’ll leave right now.”

Jungkook jabbed a finger into Jimin's lean shoulder, forgetting about the bruises, only remembering when Jimin buckled forward, a hiss of pain scraping through his teeth. Guilt swarmed Jungkook's chest and he stepped back, rubbing his neck, regaining himself.

"Why are you covered in bruises?" Jungkook asked, words a low thrum deep in his throat.

Jimin shook his head, gripping his shoulder. His legs were shaking, fingers twitching, body sagging back against the wall. "I'm not."

Jungkook scoffed, cocking his head to the side. "Don't lie to me. Not again. Not like you did in the court house."

Jimin flinched at those words and he licked his lips again, fingers tightening into a white knuckled grip on the blanket. His eyes were raw, flickering with pain and terror. He was looking up at Jungkook with a sort of pleading in his eyes that was begging the younger not to make him explain. But Jungkook waited, stance firm, unyielding.

"It's nothing," Jimin whispered, voice cracking. "Just my neck."

"You're lying again."

Jimin shook his head.

"I saw you this morning," Jungkook confessed. "I saw you without a shirt." Jimin's eyes widened, mouth parted slightly in surprise. "You're covered in bruises."

Jungkook reached out, ignoring the way Jimin jerked away from him as he grabbed his wrist, pulling his arm out from beneath the blanket. Jungkook kept Jimin's gaze as he pushed up the sleeve of his black and white striped shirt all the way to his forearm. Jimin didn't struggle, didn't try to tear himself away, let Jungkook do it. Let Jungkook reveal the handprint bruised around his bicep, other little splotches of purple pressed into his skin.

"This isn't from a rough fuck," Jungkook whispered, eyes narrowing, outright glaring down at the pink haired Jimin.

"I fell down the stairs."

"You fell down the stairs? You expect me to believe that?"

"Why does it matter?" Jimin snapped, finally tugging his arm out of Jungkook's grasp. He pulled his sleeve down, the sleeves long enough to give him sweater paws. He readjusted the blanket around his small shoulders, a sudden strength rising up. "You hate me; you said so yourself. So why does it matter?"

Jungkook took a deep breath, closing his eyes for a second before opening them once more. "Because of just that. Because you're right. I do hate you; I hate you and you know it. So why would you come here? Why call *me* up and stay the night at *my* house and then start getting comfortable with *my* hyungs? Did Minwo put you up to this?"

"No," Jimin stated firmly. "Minwo doesn't even know where I am."

"And that's another thing," Jungkook growled. "That doesn't even make any sense. Why would he kick you out during a snowstorm? Why can't you go home?"

"That's none of your business."

“You’re my enemy’s lover-”

“Stop calling me that,” Jimin snapped.

“What? Stop calling you *what?”*

“Stop calling me his lover. I’m his *boyfriend* .”

“Whatever. Point is, you’re staying in my house. Buddying up with my family. How do I know this isn’t some big ruse to get more information about me? Find more evidence to use against me?”

“Evidence? What the hell are you talking about?”

“My company. The company Minwo is trying to steal from me. Golden Closet Films.”

Jimin shook his head. “Minwo isn’t stealing anything from you. You fucked up when you assaulted your assistant.”

Jungkook’s vision went red, his hands balling into fists in his pockets. He let out a long, low breath, trying to steady the tremor swinging up through his spine into his chest. “I never assaulted anyone. It was Minwo. And you have no fucking right-”

“How do you know it was Minwo?”

Jungkook’s body was a coiled spring ready to snap. “What are you doing here? Just tell me or you can leave right now.”

Jimin’s gaze sharpened as he looked up at Jungkook defiantly. “I’m not doing anything. I’m not conspiring to take you down. I’m not manipulating you or gathering information. I just needed a place to stay for the night because, yes, Minwo *did* kick me out in a snowstorm. Besides, you’re the one that insisted I stay this morning. Why are you acting so defensive only now?”

Jungkook squared his shoulders, glaring at Jimin. He barely noticed Yoongi’s hand on his shoulder, barely registered the warning in his touch. “I hate to break it to you, but Minwo’s a fucking manipulator. He’ll do anything to take me down and make my company his. And if that means sending his little fuck-buddy to my house in the middle of the night, he would. Either you’re both in on it, or he doesn’t care about you nearly as much as he should.”

“He does care about me. He does,” Jimin hissed.

“Has he even called to check up on you? You yourself said he supposedly doesn’t know where you are. What *boyfriend* does that?” Jungkook asked, voice cold and sharp. “I really don’t think he loves you at all. Maybe that’s why he kicked you out.”

Jimin’s expression fell, mouth dropping open in shock. His eyes were wide, brows raised, body frozen in place. Stricken. Hurt. Really fucking hurt. Agony creased the lines of Jimin’s face, tears welling up in his eyes as his gaze fell to the floor. “He does love me.”

“Then he wouldn’t hit you,” Jungkook scoffed, looking up at the ceiling, tilting his head to the side. There was so much hatred and rage trapped in his body, so much pent up frustration that he felt like he was about to burst. But before he could, Yoongi was stepping between them, hand on Jungkook’s chest, pushing him back.

“Jungkook, go take a break,” Yoongi said firmly. “You need to cool down.”

Jungkook's eyes widened. "What?"

"You've said enough," Yoongi insisted.

"Hyung, are you serious? You're taking his side?"

"Jeon Jungkook, *go for a walk,"* Yoongi commanded calmly.

Jungkook stormed past the two, throwing Jimin one last dirty look. He rushed down the stairs, flinging on his jacket, shoving his feet into his pair of Timbs, grabbing his keys.

"Did Jiminie ask-- aish, where are you off to?" Jin was asking.

"Hayoon's."

"Why-"

Jungkook ignored him, flung open the door and stepped out into the cold winter air. Pulled out his phone as he made his way to his car, feet crunching through the snow.

I'm coming over.

not worth it

Chapter Notes

> If you're sensitive to non-con elements, please skip the ending. I'll put a * where you should stop reading if you choose to do so. Thanks again for all the support :)

Jimin didn’t or couldn’t or wouldn’t feel the hand on his shoulder. Wasn’t able to comprehend the words being spoken to him or the air going in and out of his lungs or the haze in his brain. Because all he could think about were those three sentences.

He doesn’t care about you nearly as much as he should.

I really don’t think he loves you at all.

Then he wouldn’t hit you.

The more logical part of himself was agreeing with Jungkook’s words, but his heart, his heart wasn’t logical. It never had been. He’d never been one to think before falling in love, had always given his everything no matter what. He’d given his everything to Minwo for two years, had gotten nothing in return. So, in a way, he knew Jungkook was right. But it hurt. Hurt like hell.

He’d overstayed his welcome. By a long shot. No matter what Jungkook had told him that morning. Jimin needed to leave. Now. So he pushed away the pale hands that were trying to soothe him, pushed them away and stood up, legs shaky.

You have no friends because nobody wants you. Not even your parents wanted you.

Jimin’s knees wobbled, numb and tingling as he made his way down the stairs, so incredibly lost. Didn’t know why he was even here. What he was doing. Not as he passed a confused Jin, who was standing up from his seemingly permanent spot on the couch, eyes fixed on Jimin, then shifting to someone behind him.

“What’s going on? How come Jungkook just stormed off? And why is Jimin crying? Are they breaking up?”

“Not now,” Yoongi snapped at the oldest.

“Wah, so rude,” Jin complained.

But Jimin was pulling on his thin blue jacket, slipping on his teal converses, tying the laces with trembling hands. He could barely see through the tears in his eyes, felt them splash down his face hot and fast, cold as they reached his chin and neck. He sniffled, congestion heavy in his nose and throat, making him cough a little.

Pathetic.

“Thank you for letting me stay,” Jimin said, forcing a smile through the tears. “You’re all very kind.” He started walking over to the door, hugging his stomach, trying not to throw up right there. When he got outside; he’d vomit when he got outside.

“Where’re you going, Jimin?” Yoongi asked.

Jimin decided it would be easier if he went home. If he begged Minwo to let him in. Anything was better than this. “Home. I need to go home.”

“Do you need a ride?” Tae asked from where he stood behind Yoongi.

But Jimin was shaking his head halfway through the other 95-er’s sentence. “No, I’ll just walk. You’ve all helped more than enough.”

His hand was on the door knob, but this time nobody stopped him as he stepped out into the calm winter night. Brisk air wrapped around him, and Jimin’s gaze followed the fresh tire tracks from where Jungkook’s car had pulled away.

He shouldn’t have asked in the first place. He should’ve just gone from store to store, maybe some gas stations. Now, now he wasn’t above begging Minwo to take him back in. He would apologize and plead and cry until his voice gave out if only he could get away from Jungkook’s house.

Because guilt was a wallowing monster, wrapping choking hands of clover around his throat. Twisting and tightening until he forgot how to breathe. Guilt, guilt was a four-faced demon, green and alive. It had always been his luck.

He should’ve known that’s how Jungkook would see the situation, should’ve known the younger would see him as a saboteur. But it hurt anyways, hurt that someone could think so lowly of him. There had been a time when he’d felt so free, so loved, felt like he could conquer the world. A time when he’d had so much support in his life, hadn’t even questioned his worth. But Minwo had cut off his ties to other people one by one, squashed his friendships and isolated him until his boyfriend was the only person Jimin had left.

Tears flowed down his face in rivulets, and by the time he was a few blocks down, his legs were shaking so bad he couldn’t stand anymore. He collapsed forward onto his knees, his pink hair pressed to his forehead with snow, crystal clear flakes caught in his lashes as soft white specks fluttered lightly from the sky, swirling around him.

Today… it had been one of the best days he’d had in so long. The feeling of being held, having someone run affectionate fingers through his hair, being eased through his sickness with soups and water and cold towels pressed to his forehead… Talking to Taehyung for an hour had been the longest conversation he’d had in so long. Jin showing him how to play video games had been the most fun he’d had in months. He hadn’t had any of that in so long, not since he’d lived with Hoseok.

The lingering urge to puke bubbled up into his throat until he couldn’t hold it back anymore. He clutched his stomach, moaning as he bent forward, gagging at the tiny amount of bile stinging the back of his mouth. But nothing came up, no matter how much he heaved. The pain from dry heaving made tears prick his eyes, stinging with the cold, and soon he was crying.

Couldn’t stop. Tears and sobs and gags as he tried to puke again and again. His knees were soaked with melted snow, burning with cold, his body covered in goosebumps.

There was a shadow beside his, then, something warm and heavy being draped over his shoulders. Jimin snapped his head up to look at the stranger, saw the mint green hair and permanently squinted eyes. It was Yoongi, Yoongi who was draping a coat around his shoulders, eyes full of concern.

Jimin tried pushing the coat away. “I can’t-- What are you doing?”

Yoongi frowned, looking down at the ground. Jimin could tell he wasn’t the type of person to show feelings well. “I’m coming with you.”

Jimin stared up at the man he’d only met that afternoon, when he’d woken up while Jin had been holding a cup of water up to his lips. Yoongi had been standing there, headphones in, watching Jimin with a weariness that had made him feel antsy.

“Thank you… but I can’t-- I can’t let you walk home with me,” Jimin murmured, face flushing with embarrassment. If Minwo saw Yoongi, or even the coat, Jimin wouldn’t stand a chance of being taken back.

Yoongi hummed. “Is it because of Minwo?”

Jimin huffed out an icy breath, trying to push the urge to sob away, chest shaking still. “I guess you know everything...”

Yoongi sighed, holding out a hand. Jimin looked at it for a moment before taking it, letting Yoongi pull him up to his feet. The coat nearly slipped from his shoulders, but Jimin grabbed it, too shocked to think about giving it back.

“Jungkook told me a while ago who you were. He only told me your name, though. Last night after you called him, he seemed really troubled, said you were coming over. I recognized your name as being Minwo’s lover.” He straightened his beanie, shoving his hands in his pockets.

Jimin was at a loss for words, mouth opening and closing. He shook his head, running a hand through his wet hair. “Why are you here then? Don’t you hate me, too?”

Yoongi shrugged. “I know what you did to Jungkook… but I also know what it’s like to struggle, to go without meals and starve at night, to freeze on the streets. You wouldn’t have asked if you really had nowhere else to go.” He kicked at the snow beneath his boots, bouncing on the balls of his feet. “I’m not good with people or reading them, and I might be wrong, but you seem like you’ve been through some tough shit. I figured you could use some help.”

Jimin wiped the tears from his face, realizing how ridiculous he must’ve looked kneeling there in the snow, gagging and sobbing. He sighed, taking a few ragged, deep breaths. “Thank you. But I can’t take this coat. I don’t want him knowing I was at your house.”

“I’ll walk with you. I’ll take the coat back with me.”

Jimin watched Yoongi with a look of pure astonishment. “Why?”

“Because you need help.”

Jimin finally relented, hanging his head in defeat. “It’s a few miles. Are you sure?”

Yoongi patted Jimin’s back, started walking in the direction Jimin had been facing. “Come on, kid. I don’t have all night,” he said lightly.

Jimin looked back at where their house was all the way down the street. It looked so warm, so friendly from where Jimin stood. He almost didn’t want to go back to Minwo. But he had to. He turned back to Yoongi, nodding as he slipped his arms into the coat, pulling it around himself and zipping it up. He was thankful for the thick material, the way it instantly made him feel warmer, more secure. And they started walking together.

God, was it awkward. The silence hung heavy between them, neither of them knowing what to talk about, or at least Jimin had no clue what he himself could possibly say. *Thank you for following me? Giving me a coat? Making sure I get home?* No, what would he say after that? And it was too soon-

"He's a good kid, you know," Yoongi murmured, voice low.

Jimin kept his gaze on the icy ground in front of him. "Jungkook?"

"He's not usually so… aggressive. In fact, he's actually really shy." Yoongi paused when Jimin turned his head to look at the mint haired young man. "He shouldn't have said those things to you, either… he wasn't always so bratty."

Jimin didn't say anything for a minute, hands pressed firmly into his pockets. The first time he'd actually talked to Jungkook had been when he'd gone to GCF to visit Minwo for lunch. Back before the assault charges had been filed against Jungkook, when the maknae and his boyfriend had been good friends. Minwo had never invited Jungkook over, never introduced him to Jimin, so that had been the first time they'd met face to face.

"When I met him two years ago," Jimin murmured. "Before everything went bad with the assault..." Yoongi tensed, so Jimin decided not to say anything more about the assaulted secretary, continued on. "He was really polite and shy, and he was also really kind. He sat down by me and started talking to me. He even got me a glass of water, even though I didn't work there."

"That's the type of thing Jungkook-ah would do," Yoongi agreed. "He doesn't care much about what other people think of him. Only what those closest think."

Jimin nodded. "We only spoke for a minute, though. And he didn't know who I was, then. I just saw him again a few months ago, and that's when he learned about me and Minwo. He kind of hated me after that."

Yoongi loosed a long, deep breath. "He changed after the assault. He closed himself off, had us all really worried for a while."

Jimin looked up at the clearing night sky, the heavy snow clouds thinning out, revealing a rare night of stars through the pollution. The orange light of street lamps guided their way, the snow glittering as they walked. He cleared his raw throat, forcing down the nausea swirling in the pit of his stomach as guilt wracked him once more.

"I feel like I made everything worse. I shouldn't have asked to stay."

Yoongi didn't deny Jimin's words. "He'll be fine. He just needs time to cool down. He's probably already feeling guilty about what he said. If not, I'm gonna talk to him about it."

Jimin shook his head, running a hand through his hair. "No, no… he was right. What he said… he wasn't… I didn't think it would look like that, but I guess it's only natural for him to assume the worst after what I did."

"No, it was disrespectful. We taught him better," Yoongi said, disapproval laced through his voice. "He agreed to let you stay over. He should've behaved better than that."

"He hates me. I think he behaved the best he could."

"No," Yoongi stated firmly. *"I* expect better from him. That's not who he is. He doesn't act out like that."

Jimin frowned as they got closer to his house. It was only a block away, and Jimin found himself coming to a stop, Yoongi stopping with him, confusion knitting his brow. Jimin licked his lips, looking over at Yoongi. He unzipped the heavy coat, immediately feeling a chill sweep through his clothes. He shrugged it off, holding it out to the elder.

“My house is just down the street,” Jimin explained.

Yoongi took the coat from Jimin, tucking it beneath his arm. “Why can’t we-”

“He wouldn’t like it.”

Yoongi nodded gently, understanding. “I know it’s not my place, but is what Jungkook said true?”

“That he… that he kicked me out?”

Yoongi glanced at the a streetlamp across the road, watching the snow through the bright orange light. “That he hits you?”

Jimin blushed, heart trembling, looking away. He was silent for a moment, trying to think of the right words to say, the right excuse to weave together. But Yoongi seemed like the person that saw through facades easily. “Yes.”

Yoongi took in the information, thinking deeply from what Jimin could see. “You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to… But does he hit you a lot?”

Jimin was studying his teal converses a little too intently. “I think he’s just stressed.”

“I’m sorry this is happening to you,” Yoongi murmured. “But it’s never okay for anyone to hit you. No matter what.”

Jimin swallowed the urge to snap at Yoongi, reminding himself that the other man had just given him a coat and walked home with him. “I love him,” Jimin mumbled, sounding weak even in his own ears.

Yoongi held up his hands in defense. “I wasn’t saying you didn’t love him. All I’m saying is this isn’t a normal thing for someone to do. It isn’t a normal thing in a relationship to be treated like this.”

“I messed up. It was my fault,” Jimin said quickly, irritation rising in his chest, but Yoongi was already shaking his head.

“It’s not your fault at all. It’s not.”

Jimin huffed out a broken breath, looking up at the sky, an uncomfortable pressure twisting his heart. “I can’t leave him.”

“I’m not telling you to. Just be careful. And if you ever, ever need help… you know where I live.”

Yoongi caught Jimin’s bicep as the younger turned to go. Jimin bit back a hiss of pain, unable to keep the grimace from his face. Yoongi had grabbed the exact spot where Minwo had just a day ago, the bruise tender and aching.

Something in Yoongi’s expression darkened as he let go. “Listen to me. You’re not alone. I’ve been where you are now.” He cleared his throat, eyes flitting to the ground, pale face tinting with a

tiny brush of color. “Back when I was younger, I had a girlfriend who treated me just like Minwo treats you. I’m not stupid and I’m not going to pretend I don’t have an idea of what’s going on. I know it’s hard to hear, and it’s even harder to admit, but it’s not worth it. Whatever you have with him, it’s not worth it.”

Jimin’s head was pounding, suddenly too hard to breathe. He glared at Yoongi, a million different arguments pounding in his chest. That was twice now he’d been told Minwo wasn’t good, and it made him want to retaliate. He knew Minwo was a little rough sometimes, but Jimin knew they loved each other. Knew Minwo cared about him.

“I’m not trying to argue,” Yoongi stated quickly before Jimin could say anything. “I’m just saying what I know from experience.”

Jimin didn’t so much as nod, stared at Yoongi, eyes scanning the elder’s face. “Everything’s fine,” Jimin insisted.

Yoongi shook his head. “It’s not. It’s not okay what he does to you. It’ll only get worse. No matter what they tell you or promise you, it only gets worse.”

Jimin didn’t say anything for a moment. “I love him,” he mumbled again, his only defense.

Yoongi nodded. “I know. But that doesn’t mean it’s okay for him to do this to you. If you need help… there is help out there. There’s places you can stay and people you can call.”

Jimin huffed, eyes burning with unshed tears. They were quiet for a few moments before Jimin stuck his hands in his pockets. His fingers brushed against the piece of paper that had started this whole mess in the first place, so he grabbed it. “Here,” Jimin said, holding out the crumpled ball to Yoongi. “Could you give this back to him? Tell him I’m sorry?”

Yoongi’s brows creased in confusion as he took the paper from Jimin. “What is it?”

Jimin felt a heaviness throb in his temple, curling down the back of his skull. He loosed a breath, shaking his head. “He’ll know.”

Yoongi nodded before tucking the crumpled paper into his coat pocket. “Do you want me to wait for you to get inside?”

“No,” Jimin said quickly. “I’ll be fine.”

Yoongi turned away to start walking, not saying anything beyond, “See you around, Jimin. Be careful.”

Jimin watched him disappear into the winter night. Yoongi didn’t turn back once, simply kept walking. Jimin waited until he was around the block to finally relax, turning back to look at Minwo’s house.

The porch lights were on, as were the lights inside, and Jimin had to remind himself over and over that there was no going back, not this time. He couldn’t go back to Jungkook’s house. So he walked up to his house, up the steps. Waited in front of the door as he tried to gather the courage he needed to knock.

His heart was beating so hard and so fast in his chest he was afraid it might explode. The bruises on his body were tingling, reminding him what had happened last time, the back of his neck aching. His blood was rushing through his head, his vision narrowing in on the door in front of him.

He took a deep breath, clutching his flip phone in his hand as he brought his other hand up. And he knocked.

It was a moment before Jimin heard footsteps, before the locks on the door clicked. Before Minwo opened the door, wearing a robe and slippers. And a frown. “I didn’t call you.”

Jimin was shivering like a wet dog, his knees almost knocking together as his gaze fell to Minwo’s feet. “I… I’m sorry. Minwo-ssi, I’m sorry. I was wrong. I was wrong.” There was a waver in his voice he couldn’t control, a pitchiness that gripped his throat.

“You’re sorry?” Minwo asked.

Jimin looked up at his boyfriend, a broken desperation filling his entire body. “I am sorry. I’m so sorry.”

Minwo’s dark eyes dragged up and down over Jimin’s weak form, and after a few heavy moments, a smile tugged at the corner of his lips. “Come in, Min-ah. You’ll catch a cold.”

Jimin’s head snapped up in shock. He honestly hadn’t expected Minwo to let him in. But there he was, opening the door wider, holding his hand out to Jimin. Jimin couldn’t hold back the tears in his eyes as he stepped up into the house, warmth enveloping him as he heard the door close behind him.

Strong arms wrapped around him from behind, pulling Jimin back into a broad chest. Minwo ducked down, planting kisses along the nape of Jimin’s neck, hands slipping under Jimin’s striped shirt. “I missed you, Min-ah,” he growled.

Deep down, Jimin knew it was wrong to let Minwo do this after all that had happened. But he didn’t dare stop it. Didn’t dare refuse his boyfriend after he’d just let Jimin back in. So he sighed, tears still streaming down his face, holding back a sob as Minwo sunk his teeth into Jimin’s neck. Jimin let out a sharp cry, groaning as Minwo eased the bite with his tongue.

“I missed you so much, Min-ah. I was worried about you. But I wanted to make sure you learned your lesson,” Minwo whispered sweetly into Jimin’s skin.

Jimin shuddered as Minwo grabbed his shoulders, turning him around to face him. Jimin looked up at Minwo, who reached down and brushed the tears from Jimin’s cheeks.

“What’s wrong, Min-ah?”

Jimin shook his head. He gently reached up and gripped Minwo’s wrists, taking a step closer. “I thought… I thought you didn’t love me anymore. I thought you didn’t care.”

Minwo’s eyes widened, but not in anger, not in fury. Curiosity. “What makes you say that?”

“I got really sick, Minwo-ssi,” Jimin murmured. “I didn’t think you’d ever kick me out during a snowstorm.”

Minwo sighed, shaking his head. “Min-ah, you know why I did it. I was worried you were cheating on me.”

Jimin looked away. “I wouldn’t. I didn’t.”

“Could we just forget about it? I’ve missed you.” Minwo took a step closer to Jimin, grabbing his chin and tilting his head up. “I’ve missed these pretty lips of yours.”

*

He leaned down and kissed Jimin roughly, tongue sliding into his mouth, teeth nipping at Jimin's lips. And Jimin almost pulled away, almost stepped back, had to stop himself. Minwo was groping his ass, then cupped his crotch, making Jimin feel queasy. They hadn't been intimate in weeks, since before Minwo's last business trip.

"Show me how sorry you are," Minwo groaned into Jimin's mouth. More tears slipped out of Jimin's eyes, and Minwo pulled back a fraction, smirking.

He pushed down on Jimin's shoulders and Jimin knew exactly what his boyfriend wanted. Figured it was the least he could do. He dropped to his knees for the second time that night, body still aching and raw with bruises. He kept his eyes on Minwo's hands as his boyfriend undid the belt to his robe, pulling it apart.

Jimin didn't have time to think before Minwo was pushing into his mouth, hands in his hair, pulling Jimin's mouth around him. Jimin gagged hard as the tip of Minwo's cock touched the back of his throat, more tears slipping down his face.

"How sorry are you, Min-ah?" Minwo asked, drawing his cock out.

"I'm sorry," Jimin whispered, his lips rubbing against Minwo's tip. Minwo thrust back in, so hard Jimin choked. The hands in his hair were tugging and pulling, pain shooting through his scalp, and he wanted to tear those hands away, wanted the comforting touches he'd received the whole day while he'd been too sick to move. But that was a reality he would never have.

Minwo fucked Jimin's mouth at a fast and furious pace, grunting and moaning as he murmured Jimin's pet name. It took everything Jimin had not to puke, not to throw up right there. He held it down as he felt Minwo's cock sliding in and out of his throat, throbbing and hot.

When Minwo came, he pulled out halfway through it so that his cum splashed down Jimin's lips and jaw, trailing down his neck. Jimin collapsed to the floor once Minwo finally let go of his hair, heard the rustle of his robe being straightened and belt tied.

"I forgive you," Minwo murmured, reaching down to rustle Jimin's hair.

Jimin watched Minwo's slippers disappear up the stairs to their bedroom, waited until his boyfriend was gone before he curled up on the floor and sobbed, rubbing the sticky cum and saliva and tears from his neck and jaw with the back of his sleeve. He sniffled, groaning at the ache in his throat, the salty taste in his mouth, the burning in his cheeks. The bruises covering his body throbbed, his neck on fire from how rough his boyfriend had been. And then he felt it. The growing, swirling nausea in the pit of his stomach, spreading to his chest, then his throat.

He made it to the kitchen sink before he finally puked, the tiny bit of soup from a couple hours previous coming up, mostly digested and rancid. And he dry heaved some more, bracing his arms against the sides of the sink as he sobbed through it all.

i meant every word

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jungkook stretched his arms over his head, yawning. His hair was a mess, his naked body lazily stretched out over Hayoon's bed. She was curled into his side, sleeping soundly, her perky breasts pressed into him. It had been a tiring night.

As soon as he'd made it through her door, he'd pinned her to the wall, kissing her roughly, frustration and hurt and anger coursing through him. He'd taken it all out on her, groaning and biting and kissing until they'd somehow made it to the bed.

Afterwards, she'd trailed kisses down his neck, finding his soft spot and sucking on it until he'd started seeing stars, low moans sliding from his throat. He'd had plenty of one night stands and even a girlfriend or two, but Hayoon was the only one who'd ever found his weak spot.

Now, he was lying next to her in the dark, his clothes strewn around the room, keys somewhere on the couch, shoes in the hall. He liked having her in his life, not just for her friendship, but for this, too. They'd both agreed there were no romantic feelings involved and never would be. And sometimes, this was what he needed. His coiled body had come undone, his muscles relaxing, the knots in his shoulders eased. The frustration was gone, but there was still something bothering him.

He stared up at the ceiling, eyes tracing imaginary shapes into the drywall. He thought back to his words, the way Jimin had flinched away from him, clearly hurt. And he felt awful. Jimin had looked like he honestly hadn't even thought about the accusations Jungkook had thrown his way, had looked so confused by them.

"What's wrong?" Hayoon mumbled, half asleep.

Jungkook shook his head, not looking at her. "Nothing."

Hayoon wrapped her arm over Jungkook's chest, even though the maknae didn't like cuddling after sex. He tried to scoot away from her, but she snuggled against him again. He sighed as she ran her fingers up and down his sculpted middle.

"You went rough tonight. Are you okay?" She leaned up, planting a kiss on Jungkook's bare shoulder.

Jungkook pushed away from her, sitting up. He heard her sigh before she sat up as well, pulling a blanket around her shoulders. And that reminded Jungkook of Jimin, the way he'd pulled that blanket around himself like it was a shield, a lifeline. Like it would save him from Jungkook's temper. Jungkook grimaced, running a hand over his face.

He wasn't like that. He wasn't mean. And yet, he'd somehow ended up spitting the nastiest accusations he could think of at a guy very much down on his luck. Jungkook groaned, rubbing his palms into his eyes.

"What's wrong?" Hayoon asked again, wrapping her arms around him from behind.

Jungkook sighed. "It's nothing."

Hayoon shifted around to sit on the bed next to Jungkook. Her pitch black hair splayed over her

shoulders, tickling her collarbones, the hickies sucked into her chest. She looked up at him with big brown eyes, obviously concerned. “Are you sure?”

Jungkook didn’t answer, turned his head away from her as he sat there in the silence of her bedroom. He looked over at the clock, seeing that it was 3 am. He would wait an hour or two more before going home. But for now, he wanted to get his mind off of Jimin.

He turned towards Hayoon, threading his fingers through her hair, pulling her into a wet kiss, full of tongue and teeth and lips. She moaned into him, and he pressed her back into the sheets.

He would think about Jimin later.

Not worth it.

Jimin curled farther into the heap of blankets Minwo had tucked him into. Everything felt so cold, so fucking cold. But his skin was fire, burning and sizzling with heat, and he’d never felt so fucking disgusting in his entire life.

“Min-ah?” A soft, warm word.

Jimin groaned, clutching at his stomach, not even bothering to look up at his boyfriend.

Not worth it.

The blankets were being pulled back, and a shiver slammed up through Jimin’s bones, static under his skin. But Minwo didn’t stop. He pulled the blankets all the way off, and Jimin shivered so hard his chest started aching with the pressure.

“Min-ah? Sit up for me.”

Jimin couldn’t unlock his arms from around his stomach, couldn’t or wouldn’t.

“Come on, Min-ah,” Minwo whispered, gently threading his arms around Jimin’s middle, pulling him to sit up. And then Minwo was lifting him, strong arms so secure around Jimin, so warm against the stark cold of the bedroom.

Not worth it.

And Minwo was taking him from the bedroom into the master bathroom, and Jimin just wanted to sleep. Sleep and sleep and never wake up, go back to the comfort of the bed. And his boyfriend set him on the closed toilet seat, began pulling off his socks.

“Min-ah, can you lift your arms for me?”

Jimin’s eyes were shut tightly, his body locking up, but he forced out a curt nod. And Minwo’s hands were there, guiding his arms up above his head, pulling his shirt off. And everything hurt, the bruises pulsing with his shivers, the back of his neck screaming out in pain along with his pounding headache.

When Jimin was stripped down to his underwear, Minwo lifted him again, Jimin whimpering. Felt the first lick of deliciously hot water touch his lower back. Jimin opened his eyes as much as he could, saw the steaming bath water and nearly cried with how good it felt as his boyfriend lowered him into the water.

His shivers eased, his body going lax as Minwo set him completely in the tub, running a hand through Jimin's pink hair. "You're so strong for me, Min-ah," Minwo cooed, leaning forward and planting a kiss on Jimin's forehead.

Not worth it.

And Minwo helped bathe him. Sat by him the entire time, working the shampoo through his hair and rinsing him off. He didn't wash anything else; Minwo didn't really like seeing Jimin naked, which was why he was still wearing his black underwear. But Minwo was there for him.

And just like every other time Jimin had been painted in bruises, Minwo was there to help him. And the kindness, it wrapped through Jimin's head, making him so confused. So fucking confused every single time.

But by the end of the bath, Jimin felt so much better. Minwo left a towel and some clean clothes for Jimin to change into, and when Jimin came out of the bathroom, the water draining from the tub, Minwo had changed the sheets on the bed and added a few more pillows.

Jimin shuffled over to the bed and sank into the blankets, everything so soft and clean and warm around him. Smelled like fresh linen, a little bit of lemon. His eyes were heavy, so heavy. Everything in him was always so heavy, weighted down. But for now, for now he felt light, so light. Even when Minwo crawled into bed next to him, another source of warmth for Jimin to cling to, he felt lighter, felt good.

He fell asleep quickly thinking of Minwo's kind eyes, wrapped up in his boyfriend's strong arms.

Not worth it.

Jungkook parked in the driveway to his house, seeing that the porch light had been left on all night. His hyungs always turned the light off at night, must have left it on for him. It made him feel a little guilty, remembering how he'd stormed out. But Yoongi shouldn't have sided with Jimin. Not after what Jimin had done.

He huffed out a deep breath, watching as mist curled away from him in a rolling puff. He tucked his coat sides together, shivering as he got out of his car. Jogged up the steps to the front door, trying the knob and finding it unlocked.

When he got inside, his eyes darted to the couch, looking for Jimin. But Minwo's pink haired lover wasn't there. He must be upstairs, must be sleeping on Jin's lap again. That thought put a sour taste in Jungkook's mouth and he scowled, already feeling the frustration from the previous night ebb into his chest.

He shrugged off his coat, setting his keys on the table and kicking off his shoes. It was early in the morning, and he was tired enough to go to sleep, but he didn't want to sleep with Jimin still in the house. Not until he did something about last night.

As he was making his way to the stairs, he was met with the sight of Yoongi. His headphones were resting around his neck, his beanie crooked, almost falling off, his head leaning against the banister as he slept. He was breathing loudly, out cold, but as Jungkook tried to move past him, Yoongi woke up.

"Jungkook-ah?"

Jungkook paused on the second stair, looking down at his hyung. “Good morning, hyung.”

Yoongi’s features quickly settled into a reprimanding glare, Jungkook preparing himself for a fight.

“You didn’t tell me where you stormed off to last night,” Yoongi started, clearly upset. “I stayed up until 5 this morning waiting for you.”

“I was at Hayoon’s. I told Jin-hyung I was going there.”

“You didn’t tell *me.”*

“You didn’t have to wait up for me, hyung. I’m not 15 anymore.”

“I didn’t know if you were going to be okay when you got home. Of course I stayed up. Jin and Tae stayed up until 2 with me. We were worried about you.”

“I’m not a kid. I can take care of myself.”

“I know, Jungkook-ah. But I’m going to stay up for you anyways.”

Jungkook ran his finger below his bangs to smooth them from his eyes, then shoved his hands in his hoodie pocket. “Hyung… I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have run off last night. But you should’ve had my back. You took Jimin’s side.”

“I only met him yesterday. You think I would choose him over you?”

“You did.”

“I didn’t. I stepped in when I saw things were getting out of hand.”

“Things weren’t getting-“

“Yes, they were. You said some things you shouldn’t have said.”

Jungkook threw his hands up. “I’m sorry, then. Tell me where Jimin is and I’ll throw myself at his feet and beg his forgiveness.”

Yoongi shook his head. He rubbed at the dark circles beneath his eyes, sighing. “Stop acting like a child.”

Jungkook glared at Yoongi. “Stop treating me like one. I haven’t been one for years.”

Yoongi stood up, straightening the beanie over his pastel green hair. “You need to learn to let go of what Minwo did to you. You need to be the bigger person and move past it.”

Jungkook pulled his hood up over his head, staring Yoongi down. “How come you’re saying this now?”

“I’m telling you what I’ve thought for a long time. You’re letting Minwo poison you-“

“Just like Jimin’s poisoned all of you?”

“This isn’t about Jimin. This is about you. The way you’re acting. You’re bitter and angry and short tempered, and I miss the kid I used to know before all this shit went down. I know you’re still capable of being that person again-“

“This *is* who I am, hyung,” Jungkook snapped.

“Stop interrupting me. I’m older than you,” Yoongi snapped back. That shut Jungkook up. “I’m telling you truths that are obviously too hard for you to hear. You need to get over what Minwo did. You’ve been dwelling on it for a year now.”

Jungkook was staring at the ground, eyes locked on the hardwood floor beneath his feet. “I’m not dwelling on anything. I’m the same person I’ve always been.”

“Listen, Jungkook-ah… I understand you’re position. You have a right to be angry, especially after everything that happened with Jimin and Minwo. But you’re letting it eat you up inside.”

“If you’re really that upset about what I said I’ll go apologize to him right now.”

“He’s gone,” Yoongi whispered, watching Jungkook closely.

“What?”

“He left right after you did. Pretty much had a mental breakdown outside. I walked him home.”

Jungkook’s brows creased, Jimin’s weak body from last night flashing through his mind. The way his face had been flushed with fever, his voice rough with sickness, his arms shaking as Jungkook had rolled up his sleeve, exposing the nasty bruise on his bicep.

He’d been an asshole. More than an asshole. The guilt from last night squeezed his heart. He turned away from Yoongi, smoothing away his bangs. “He left?”

Yoongi nodded. “He thanked us and walked out. I put on my shoes and grabbed an extra coat and followed him. Found him kneeling in the snow, puking. We walked home and I made sure Minwo let him back in. Makes you feel real good about what you said, huh?”

Jungkook flinched at his hyung’s words. He’d felt bad about the whole thing to begin with, but knowing what Jimin had done afterwards made him feel terrible. He didn’t know what to say, if he could say anything at all. He’d never been one to lash out like he had yesterday, didn’t know how to deal with the repercussions. “Hyung…”

“He told me to give this to you,” Yoongi said, fishing a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket.

Jungkook took the paper with wary hands, not sure what it could be. At first, he didn’t recognize it at all, but as he flipped it over, saw the faded ink of his phone number… his heart dropped into a pit of icy water, mind blanking as he stared at it. He knew Jimin had to have kept it in order to have called him the other night, but he hadn’t really thought about it.

“Why did he give this back?” Jungkook asked in a low murmur.

Yoongi started walking up the stairs, heading for his bedroom. “He didn’t say.”

Jungkook stared at the paper, thought it might catch fire in his palm. Didn’t know what to do, what to say. “I can’t… I can’t apologize to him. I meant what I said. I meant every word.”

Yoongi didn’t look back at the maknae. “You don’t have to apologize if you have no regrets about the situation. But the kid I knew wouldn’t have said those things in the first place.”

“Hyung… that’s not fair.”

Yoongi was up the stairs, stopped at the top. Finally looked back at him. “Jungkook-ah, you know

I’m not one to coddle. You’re like the younger brother I never had, but I can’t let you get off so easy for acting like that.”

“Why do you care so much? You only met Jimin yesterday.”

“I understand him a lot more than I should.” It looked like Yoongi was about to say something else, but stopped himself. And with that, Yoongi disappeared from the top of the stairs, the sound of a door opening and closing echoing through the hall.

Jungkook looked back down at the paper in his hand, fingers curling around it in a fist, crushing it. He couldn’t apologize, couldn’t bring himself to think about calling Jimin yet. He pulled his phone out of his pocket, scrolling through his call history. He would delete the number before he had second thoughts. Yoongi was wrong.

But just as he was about to delete the number from his call history for the second time in the last few months, he paused, finding himself adding it to his contacts instead. Didn’t know why, wasn’t going to apologize. And yet, he now had “Park Jimin” put into his contacts list once again.

He shook his head, turning off his phone and shoving both it and the paper into his pocket before continuing up the stairs, too tired to think about it anymore.

This whole situation would blow over in a few days.

Chapter End Notes

Jungkook's only a brat for a little bit longer, don't worry! Hang in there :D
Also, thank you so much for the comments! I love reading them and they honestly make my day. I really wasn't planning on ever posting this story, so the comments are super encouraging. It makes it so much harder to wait to post the next updates haha. So instead of 2-3 a week, it'll probably be every other day or something idk I honestly have no impulse control lol
(oh and kudos to anyone who finds the easter eggs hidden throughout this story. just little numbers or scenes or phrases, but they're there nonetheless and some of them are super obvious. i don't think i have any in this chapter but i definitely do throughout the whole story)

even if it hurts

Chapter Notes

i have no impulse control
...
here's another chapter
thank you so, so much for the love <3

Jimin’s eyes opened slowly, taking in the pale morning sunlight. He stared up at the ceiling, watching the way the light curved through the room. Stared and stared and didn’t move. Thought maybe he was having one of those dreams where you were conscious while sleeping; lucid dreams, he thought they were called. But when the bed dipped and Minwo’s face appeared in his line of sight, he blinked, heart jumping.

“Min-ah, get up,” Minwo said softly, running the back of his finger down Jimin’s cheek.

Jimin immediately shifted, body burning from last night’s activities. Rough kisses and hungry hands and Minwo taking and taking and taking. Hard, Minwo always went so hard on Jimin, always made sure he woke up with a burning hurt between his legs the next morning.

It had been two weeks since everything with Jungkook had happened. He’d been too sick to properly move for at least two more days, and surprisingly Minwo had been at his side, helping him through it all.

Whatever you think you have with him, it’s not worth it.

Jimin shoved Yoongi’s words from his mind as he sat up in the bed. Minwo did care. He’d always cared. It was just stress that made Jimin’s boyfriend act out sometimes. Just stress.

“You’re so sleepy this morning,” Minwo laughed, leaning down to give Jimin a peck on the forehead.

Jimin frowned. Minwo was acting strange, acting too… nice, too affectionate. Ever since the night he’d gotten back. Jimin ran a hand through his now platinum blonde hair, smoothing it down.

“I have a surprise for you, Min-ah,” Minwo chimed, a little too enthusiastic for Jimin to feel comfortable.

“What is it?” Jimin asked carefully.

Minwo’s finger traced the sharp line of Jimin’s jaw. He leaned forward, planting kisses behind where his finger had been. Jimin’s stomach clenched as he tried to keep his brow from furrowing, from pushing away.

“What is it?” Jimin asked again.

Minwo sighed, pulling back. “You’re so impatient. You need to work on that.”

Jimin’s gaze fell to the white sheets pooled in his lap, his bare arms folded over his muscled

stomach. “Sorry,” he muttered.

Minwo stood from the bed, walking over to their dresser. He dug through it for a moment, muttering annoyed curses as he tossed one of Jimin’s cardigan’s to the side.

When Jimin had finally made his way up to their room that night two weeks ago, before he’d collapsed into fever again, he’d found a disaster. Minwo had torn their bedroom apart, probably looking for that paper. Bed sheets had been ripped from the bed, strewn around the room, along with dumped out drawers and scattered clothes. Every single picture of Jimin in the entire house had been shattered, except for one. Not that there had been many in the first place.

Jimin had cleaned everything up that night, fury curling through him so fiercely he’d barely been able to hold back as he’d tucked the only picture he had of his parents-- now broken and cracked-- beneath his pillow. Minwo had gone on a rampage, tearing apart all of Jimin’s belongings looking for that paper. Jimin silently thanked whatever god was looking out for him that the paper had been in the jacket Minwo had given him.

Jimin’s gaze refocused on the present as Minwo turned around finally, holding something behind his back. He was smiling, and Jimin’s arms tightened around his stomach.

“Hold out your hand, Min-ah,” Minwo ordered.

Jimin forced one of his hands to reach out, other hand curling even harder into his middle. He took a deep breath, mind swirling with warning. The last time Minwo had surprised him, it had been with the flip phone to replace his smartphone.

Minwo set a piece of paper in the palm of Jimin’s hand, and Jimin masked his flinch as he studied it. His first thought was that Minwo had somehow found the paper with Jungkook’s number on it, somehow known Jimin had given it to Yoongi. But it wasn’t that paper at all. It was a receipt. A receipt for a… train ticket? From Busan to Seoul?

Jimin couldn’t hide the confusion on his face as he looked from the receipt up to Minwo. Minwo was staring at him expectantly, as if waiting for Jimin to thank him for whatever the receipt meant. But Jimin had no idea.

“Slow as always,” Minwo laughed, leaning down to ruffle Jimin’s hair.

Jimin swallowed the bitterness that came with the layered insult, instead focusing on the ticket receipt. “What is this?”

“It’s a receipt,” Minwo stated. “Someone’s visiting us from Busan.”

Jimin knew it could only be one person. And despite himself, there were tears pressing to appear, a lump forming in his throat. *It couldn’t be.* Jimin hadn’t seen him in months. And there was a sudden hope, a sudden burst of light that had expanded into his chest, knocking the air from his lungs, making it so hard to breathe.

“Your brother’s coming to visit for a bit,” Minwo confirmed.

Jimin shook his head, running a hand through his hair. “Jihyun is coming here?”

Minwo nodded. “You’ve been down lately. I figured this might help.”

I really don’t think he loves you at all. Maybe that’s why he kicked you out.

He does love me.

Jimin sprang from the bed, throwing his arms around Minwo's neck. Minwo chuckled, wrapping his arms around Jimin's lean frame. Jimin held back the tears, knew Minwo didn't like tears. So he would wait. He would wait until he was alone to cry.

"Oh, and Min-ah?"

Jimin pulled back, looking up at Minwo.

"I'm going on a business trip to Japan. I'll be there for a little over a month."

A rock dropped into the pit of Jimin's stomach. "A month?" Part of him felt relieved. But the other part knew what this meant. It meant phone calls to check in the morning, afternoon, and evening. It meant taking pictures holding up a certain amount of fingers or standing next to something to prove he was telling the truth.

"I know, Min-ah, I know. It's a long time. That's why I figured it would be a good time for your brother to visit."

"When is he getting here?"

"Tomorrow. I leave today, in case you wanted to know."

Jimin nodded, smile staining his cheeks. "Thank you, Minwo-ssi. Thank you so much."

Minwo laughed again. "You're so easy to please. Just make sure not to go out while I'm gone."

Jimin swallowed hard, schooling his features carefully as the urge to resist panged through him. "I want to spend time with him while he's here. I want to do things."

Minwo sighed, looking up at the ceiling. "We can talk about that later."

"I want to be able to go into town with him," Jimin pressed.

"We'll talk about it when it gets to that."

"Please. It'll just be to a couple stores, maybe to eat out a few times… maybe the library or the movies?"

Minwo rolled his eyes, turning away from Jimin. "You know how I feel about you going out alone-"

"But I won't be alone. I'll be with Jihyun."

Minwo shook his head. "We'll talk later."

"I'll text you and call you and send you pictures and stuff," Jimin pleaded. "I just want to have fun with him."

Minwo's nose scrunched, the beginnings of anger slipping through his happy mask. "I fucking said we'll talk about it later."

Jimin reeled himself back in. He'd pressed too much. Should've dropped it the first time. "Okay, sorry," Jimin muttered, looking back down at the receipt in his hands.

It was quiet for a moment before Minwo sighed, exasperated. He stepped forward, hand heavy on Jimin's shoulder. "Listen, I love you, but if someone found out who you were to me, I'd be fucked. If you're out there running around in town, someone might recognize you or follow you back here or something. I can't risk that."

I can't risk you ruining my career, Jimin added in his mind. But he was nodding anyways. "I understand."

"Don't look so dejected," Minwo sighed, rolling his eyes again. "God, you piss me off sometimes."

Are you sure? I can stay?

How many times are you going to ask that?

I can ask again if it'll piss you off more.

Jungkook's soft smile, light scoff, easy countenance. How close he'd stood to Jimin, taller and broader and filled with an athletic grace Jimin envied. And when he'd held out his hand to help Jimin up, he'd looked like an angel, pure and kind and good. Those black-brown eyes of his had been piercing, staring right into Jimin's own. Piercing and thrilling and all sorts of wrong, so wrong. Because Jimin hadn't failed to noticed the way Jungkook had studied his face, eyes flicking down to his lips for a split second.

Wrong, all of it. Wrong to even think back on it. Jungkook had made sure Jimin had remembered how much hate the maknae had for him. What was even worse was that Jimin kind of wanted to go back to Jungkook's house, even though the younger hated him. But Jin and Yoongi and Tae hadn't seemed to mind, had spent the day talking to him, taking care of him.

Jimin snapped out of those wrong thoughts when Minwo pulled him in for a brief kiss before stepping away, starting to gather up his things, packing for his trip. "Thank you."

Minwo didn't say anything to that, continued shoving things into his suitcase as if Jimin hadn't said anything at all. Jimin took this as his cue to leave the room. So he pulled on a shirt (Minwo didn't like him sleeping naked after they had sex, so he was already wearing pants) and made his way downstairs.

He hadn't eaten anything yesterday, so this morning he was starving. He rummaged through the fridge, looking for anything he'd be able to eat. Minwo bought certain things like protein drinks for Jimin, but he didn't like the taste of them. He preferred drinking pear juice to anything, loved the stuff, but Minwo said it was better if Jimin drank water.

So Jimin grabbed his protein drink, unscrewing the cap. Drank more than half of it in one go, he was so hungry. He made a face at the taste of it, nose scrunching and eyes squinting as the chalkiness of the drink washed through his mouth.

He wanted real food. He wanted omelettes, like the one Jin had cooked for him. The first home cooked meal he'd had in a year. And he wanted someone to teach him how to play video games. And someone to cuddle with. And someone to tell stupid jokes that only made Jimin laugh.

Basically, he missed Jin, even though he didn't even know the guy that well.

"I'm leaving, Min-ah," Minwo called.

Jimin turned around, surprised. "Already?"

“I have another press conference concerning Jungkook’s assault case.”

Jimin nodded absentmindedly, thinking back to how Jungkook had stood over him as he’d dry heaved into the toilet a hundred times. How the maknae had helped him up, offered him a ride to where he needed to go. How even though Jungkook had gotten so angry with Jimin before he’d stormed off, he hadn’t once raised a fist to hit him.

“I’ll call you at noon,” Minwo said, opening the front door.

Jimin’s heart sank a little at that. His boyfriend would call at noon. And in the evening. And the next morning and noon and evening after that. On and on for the entire month he was supposed to be gone. And if Jimin missed even one call, he’d have hell to pay.

“Love-”

The front door shut.

Minwo was gone.

And Jimin was alone once more.

“...you.”

Pain spiked through Jungkook’s body as he fell backwards, landing on his ass. He let out a hiss of frustration before pushing himself up, sweat drenching his brow, dripping down his neck. He tried the dance move again. And again. And again.

He’d been spending more and more time in the practice room the last few weeks. Releasing his pent up energy, the lingering frustration trailing after him like a second shadow. Because he couldn’t stop thinking about the broken look on Jimin’s face. The bruises on his body. The way his arms had shaken trying to hold himself steady over the toilet bowl as he’d heaved again and again, nothing coming up.

Jungkook kept trying to convince himself that apologizing was stupid. It had been two weeks since the whole thing had happened. His hyungs had stopped mentioning it by now, the incident probably completely gone from their minds.

And Jungkook hadn’t really done anything wrong. He’d invited Jimin in when he’d had nowhere else to go. He’d given Jimin a couch to sleep on and offered him a ride to where he needed to go. Had shared his hyungs for a day. He’d done a lot of good.

But he’d also fucked up.

So here he was, going over choreography by himself in an empty practice room. The world outside was dark, the sun not yet risen. He hadn’t been able to sleep, so he’d figured he might as well practice, even if it was 4 am. And he did. He practiced until the sun rose and other practice rooms were unlocked and in use.

The strikingly pale morning light lit the room with a breathless chill as Jungkook tried the move over and over, gradually getting better at it. It was one of those winter days where it almost seemed like spring was coming. It was the end of February, so Jungkook supposed spring was near.

The snow was dripping and melting off of branches and bushes, the roads and sidewalks showing no signs of ever being covered in snow in the first place, ice half melted on the grass. It looked warm outside. Until you saw someone walking past huddled in a coat and hat and gloves, scarf wrapped around the lower half of their face, shivering.

There was another press conference concerning Jungkook's case today. One he was not invited to. Rather, he would be briefed on what was discussed later by Namjoon.

The thing that hurt the most was that he knew he hadn't hurt the assistant. And yet, people had still believed him capable of it. Because Jungkook's DNA had been found on her. He hadn't had a good alibi. He had been in his office working late when it'd happened, had been the one to stumble upon her broken body and call the police.

There was enough evidence to make him a suspect, but not enough to put him in prison. And Minwo, Jungkook knew it was that bastard, knew he was somehow responsible for the setup as soon as Minwo had testified against him.

"You're here early."

Jungkook turned around, breathing hard, sweat beading on his brow and sliding down his neck. He smiled weakly at Hoseok. Hoseok's nose was red from being out in the cold, sniffling a little, and Jungkook shoved away the thought of Jimin on his doorstep, half frozen. Pink hair and blue fuzzy jacket, striped shirt and faded shorts.

"Morning, hyung," Jungkook greeted.

"Jungkook-ah… you look down. You okay?" Hoseok asked, shrugging off his thick black coat, tucking his gloves and hat into one of the coat pockets, setting his big duffle bag on the floor.

"It's nothing, hyung," Jungkook tried assuring his friend.

Hobi walked up to Jungkook, all humor fading from his ever-sunshine personality. He placed a hand on Jungkook's neck, looking up at the maknae. "It's not nothing. I'm really worried."

Jungkook shrugged. "Sorry, hyung, I'm just tired."

Hoseok's brow creased, didn't look like he bought Jungkook's words for even a second. "I'm here if you need me."

Jungkook nodded. "I know."

Hoseok ran his thumb over Jungkook's neck, caressing the soft skin there. He reached up and ruffled the maknae's hair, careful smile returning. "If there was something, you would tell me, right?"

Guilt pooled in his stomach. He looked away from Hoseok's earnest gaze, down at the white floors, the mirror wall, the white ceiling. Anywhere but his hyung's face. But he knew he couldn't carry on with this, couldn't carry the confliction for much longer. "It's that guy from a couple weeks ago."

"The guy that had something to do with Minwo?"

Jungkook nodded. "I said some things I shouldn't have said… I meant them, too… but I should've kept my mouth shut. Yoongi-hyung is a little upset with me about the whole thing and I don't know what to do." The maknae didn't fail to notice the way Hoseok perked up a little at Yoongi's

name.

“Have you talked to this guy since then? Maybe you just need to talk to him.”

“I’m not sorry for what I said.” Jungkook watched Hoseok’s troubled expression.

“Then don’t apologize. Talk to him and see what needs to be said.”

See what needs to be said.

Jungkook nodded slowly, thoughtfully. Maybe he didn’t have to apologize. Maybe it would be enough to simply talk to Jimin. “I’ll think about it.”

Hoseok smiled, clapping Jungkook’s neck lightly before his arm dropped back to his side and he was kneeling down, opening his duffel bag. “Don’t leave anything unresolved, Jungkook-ah. It only hurts more as time passes. Resolve everything, even if it hurts. You’ll regret it in the end if you don't.”

The way he said those words… Jungkook knew it wasn’t simply cookie-cutter advice from a quote book. It was from experience, a sudden weight on his hyung’s shoulders. And that same overwhelming grief from two weeks ago was like a second skin on Hoseok, and Jungkook found himself thinking more carefully about what he should do.

He needed to call Jimin. He needed to settle things. So he patted Hoseok on the back, walking past him and grabbing his phone from his own duffel bag. Slipped out into the hall, a determination settling over him. He was the Golden Maknae. He could and would accomplish anything once he put his mind to it.

He scrolled down through his contacts, finding Jimin’s name. Pressed call before he had a chance to rethink himself. He held the phone up to his ear, hand shaking so much he had to duck into an empty room, embarrassed.

The phone rang through a few times. Then it went to voicemail. Jungkook hung up before he could mess up even more with an awkward recorded message. He tried calling two more times before giving up. But he couldn’t back down now. Jimin would see that he’d called, whether he remembered the maknae’s phone number or not.

He went back into the room, Hoseok warming up, stretching his limbs against the wall. He looked over at Jungkook as the younger shoved his things into his duffel bag, pulling out his coat and keys, changing into his Timbs.

“Where’re you off to all of the sudden?” Hoseok asked.

“I’m resolving my shit,” Jungkook said with a bunny smile.

“Wah, you swear while you smile. My dongsaeng is too bold,” Hoseok complained as Jungkook threw him one last goodbye before leaving.

a caged bird

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The door opened just a crack, hinges squeaking the tiniest bit, and Jungkook's eyes shot to the person peeking out through the opened sliver. The first thing the maknae noticed was the change in hair color. The pink was gone, replaced with a platinum blond that shimmered in the winter sun.

"Jungkook?"

Jungkook's heart was beating hard and fast in his chest, and he found himself staring at Jimin, anger boiling under his skin at the sight of Minwo's lover. "We need to talk," Jungkook murmured.

Something akin to fear shone in Jimin's eyes and the door didn't budge, still mostly closed. "I didn't do anything."

"I know, I just-"

"I left, okay?"

Jungkook shook his head, stepping closer to the door. "No, no. I want to talk about what happened. About what I said."

Jimin's swirling brown eyes narrowed beneath his silvery blond bangs, pale face flushing. He glared at the maknae, the door closing a little bit more. "I don't want to talk to you. Just leave me alone."

Jungkook placed a gentle hand on the door. "Please. I just want to talk."

"So you can tell me more about how pathetic I am? No, thank you."

"No-- I'm not…" Jungkook hadn't come to apologize, but that's where his mind seemed to be edging towards. He knew Jimin was about to slam the door shut any second, knew he wouldn't open it again. This was his one shot to fix this so that he could go back to getting a decent night's sleep. "I'm sorry," he blurted.

Jimin blinked up at him, frozen with shock. As if he hadn't been expecting Jungkook to apologize, either. The door opened a little more, though not enough to really let the younger in. "What?"

Jungkook loosed a breath, looking up at the bright winter sky above his head, so stark and blue and beautiful. "I'm sorry," he said again. Didn't know why. Didn't mean it at all.

There was a heavy pause, tense and uncomfortable as the door opened a fraction more, and Jungkook's gaze was pulled back to the slightly shorter young man. He was shirtless, the maknae realized. Drenched in sweat, a healthy sheen smoothed over his bare, muscled torso, a drop sliding down his neck over a collarbone. The bruises were gone, only some red marks dotting his shoulders and biceps: marks from being handled too roughly.

Jimin finally relented, the door opening all the way.

Jungkook couldn't keep his gaze from quickly flitting over Jimin's body, from the running shoes on his feet and basketball shorts hanging low on his hips to the soft tan skin of his bare chest and

white strips of cloth wrapped around his hands. But Jimin didn't notice Jungkook's glance. Was turning away as Jungkook cautiously stepped up into the house.

He'd never been inside Minwo's home, and it actually wasn't what Jungkook had been expecting. It wasn't cold or dark or evil. (Okay, so maybe it was a little ridiculous to imagine it as a dungeon.) But it was actually… nice.

Cozy and homely, with beige walls and pictures hanging around the room, a big plush couch pushed up against the wall and an armchair next to it. A spiral staircase wound up to the second floor, a plain staircase leading down to the basement. The living room lead into a large kitchen, a long mahogany table spanning the length of the dining room.

Everything was spotless. Clean. Completely organized. As if this was Jimin's little cage and he did the best he could to keep it tidy. And Jimin, he had grabbed a hoodie from a closet, pulled it on over his toned torso, hiding himself in baggy clothing once more.

"I, uh… I tried to call you," Jungkook offered up in the silence that had taken over them.

"I was working out," Jimin explained, unwrapping the cloth from his hands.

Jungkook personally loved to exercise, his hyungs calling him a "muscle pig" because of his "serious body." Jungkook didn't do it for any other reason except he liked working himself. "What kind of exercise?"

"I do a little of everything." Jimin ran a hand through his sweaty blond bangs.

"Punching bag?" Jungkook asked, nodding to the discarded hand wrappings on the counter.

"Yeah." Jimin looked the maknae up and down, as if assessing a potential threat before pulling out a barstool, sitting. He motioned to another chair, but Jungkook shook his head.

"I prefer to stand."

Mostly because he couldn't sit still. Even now, he was fidgeting with his hands inside his pockets, pulling the corner of his phone case off and pushing it back on, playing with his keys in the other pocket. He'd always been a fidgeter, never able to stay still for very long.

But Jimin didn't seem to care. Stood up again, leaning back against the edge of the counter, folding his arms over his stomach. "What did you want to talk about?"

"I feel bad about what happened," Jungkook started, surprising himself. Apparently he was being honest today. *Don't leave anything unresolved.* "I shouldn't have said those things. I shouldn't have accused you of trying to manipulate me or anything. It was stupid."

Jimin's gaze fell to the floor. His lips were pressed tightly together, almost looking like he was about to cry. He glanced up and away from Jungkook, gaze focused on some faraway land nobody else could see. He looked lost and broken and confused, and a part of Jungkook thought he could also see a hurt that hadn't been there before.

"It's okay. I shouldn't have asked in the first place," Jimin muttered, voice small, quiet.

"No, I… I was caught off guard. I didn't know what to think about the whole thing." *Especially after what happened at the courthouse.* Jungkook rubbed the back of his neck, shifting awkwardly. "I shouldn't have said any of that."

Jimin's lips were a thin line, hands in his hoodie pocket. Sweat was still beaded along his brow, a drop slipping down his face and falling from his jaw. He nodded. Didn't say anything.

"Yoongi-hyung told me what happened after I left," Jungkook found himself saying. Thinking about Jimin freaking out, kneeling on the ground, puking… it made Jungkook nauseous, made him feel like he'd been the one to push Jimin out the door.

Jimin sighed, exhaustion tugging down on his small frame. A broken smile appeared on his lips as he threaded his fingers through his hair, other arm still wrapped around his middle. "You all must think I'm pathetic."

Jungkook didn't say anything. He wanted to agree, wanted to push all of his hurts and frustrations onto Minwo's lover. But he held his tongue. Wasn't there to cause more problems. "You had a bad night. There's nothing pathetic about that."

But Jimin wasn't listening. "No, I just- I shouldn't have asked you. I should've just toughed it out."

Jungkook knew it wasn't his place. Wasn't his business. He didn't know anything about abusive relationships or how to deal with someone that was in one, but he wanted answers. Another thing that had been poisoning his dreams was Jimin's shivering form on his porch, shorts and a thin jacket his only protection against the snow whipping through the air.

"I know it's not my place…" Jungkook's voice was low, cautious. "And you don't have to tell me at all… but what happened? What *really* happened?"

Jimin's face drained of color, just like it had when Jungkook had confessed to seeing his bruised torso. Jimin bit his lip, unable to keep the maknae's gaze as his head tilted down.

"You said you fell down the stairs," Jungkook prompted, eyeing the spiral staircase that disappeared into the ceiling.

Jimin shrugged, turning away and walking over to where he'd set his empty glass. Began filling it again, the faint sound of a stomach rumbling reaching Jungkook's ears. He watched Jimin's back as the elder looked out the window above the kitchen sink. "I did fall down the stairs. That wasn't a lie."

"But…?"

Jungkook took a few steps forward, catching Jimin's side profile. The sharp jawline, high nose, soft lips. Smooth pastel light painted over his seemingly perfect skin, brown eyes catching at just the right angle, little specks of swirled grey brought out.

Beautiful. Longing. Sad. A caged bird peering out into a wintry world.

He wished he had his camera, wished he could capture that look, though he didn't know if a picture could do it justice. Didn't know if he should even be thinking about taking a picture of Jimin, a picture of his enemy's lover.

Jimin's head turned just a tiny bit, looking at Jungkook with a weariness that overpowered the lover's form completely. Looked like he was at a halfway point between breaking down and collapsing from exhaustion.

"I don't mean to pry. I… I don't know, I just want some answers… about the bruises." Jungkook had been born shy, had been so incredibly shy growing up that he'd always waited until all of his hyung's had fallen asleep before taking a shower. But little by little he'd changed, his hyung's

helping him in different ways to grow into the person he was today. He hadn't really dealt with his shyness in a while, was surprised at the sudden heat in his own cheeks, the lack of courage to speak his mind. "I don't even know why I'm asking."

Jimin shrank back at that statement, looking even worse. "I would want some answers, too, if someone did to me what I did to you." He carded his fingers through his blond hair again. Opened and closed his mouth. Struggled to get the words out. "I, um… Minwo gets stressed sometimes. He forgets his own strength. But it's nothing, really. Just stress."

Jungkook didn't like the image that popped into his head. Didn't like the idea of someone beneath Minwo's fist, inflicting the bruises Jungkook had seen plastered into Jimin's skin just two weeks before. He didn't like the idea of anyone getting beaten, whether he cared for them or not.

But again, Jimin was Minwo's lover. Whatever had happened between them, in the end, was their own business. Jimin could leave whenever he wanted to, and he was obviously still with Minwo so it must not be that bad.

"Why did you give the paper back?"

Jimin tipped his head to the side, shifting, eyes still on the ground. "Why did you give it to me in the first place?"

Jungkook was debating whether he should tell the truth about this one. Was quiet for a bit too long to be comfortable before he finally admitted it. Because it was true. "I wanted to be your friend… get to know you... and I sort of… I sort of had a massive crush on you."

Jimin's mouth dropped open, a little ' *oh'* escaping his lips as he blushed. It was quiet for a moment, neither of them looking at each other, a weirdness filling the air between them. Jungkook sighed, staring at a cup of water on the counter, the condensation beading around the outside, dripping down onto the marble countertop. Eyes flitted up to Jimin as the elder ran his hands through his hair again for the millionth time.

Jimin was about to say something when Jungkook heard a chime, both of them turning towards the source of the sound. Jimin cursed, sprinting over to the table where his little black flip phone sat on the table, undisturbed. Jungkook watched as Jimin picked up the device, seeing something on the screen that had him going pale. He answered the phone quickly, clearly panicked.

"Minwo-ssi?"

Disgust shot through the pit of Jungkook's stomach. Eyes burned into the back of Jimin's head. Because he was suddenly reminded of who exactly he had been talking to. Who he had come to see.

"No, no, I was just working out… No, I didn't have my phone on me. It was on the table… No, I'm at home. I was--" Jimin ran a hand through his hair. "I was working out…" Jimin glanced over at Jungkook, freezing. " *I'm alone.* I swear I'm alone."

Jungkook's muscles tensed, heart dropping into his stomach. Turned, looking around the room. Looked for hidden cameras or any sign that Minwo was actually home. But there was nothing.

"Could we please not do this right now? I'm alo-- I'm alone… *I am* . I was working out."

Jungkook shoved his hands in his pockets, uncomfortable more than anything now. It wasn't something he was sure he should be hearing, so he wandered into the front room, looking around, trying to ignore Jimin's assurances that he was home alone. Found himself studying the photos on

the walls.

The pictures all had Minwo in them. Minwo with what seemed to be his parents. Minwo in his new office at GCF, two thumbs up, grinning. Minwo graduating from college. Minwo with what might have been an old girlfriend. *Minwo, Minwo, Minwo… What about Jimin?*

Jungkook glanced over at the dining room, where Jimin was turned away from him, knuckles white around the little flip phone pressed to his ear, other hand threaded through his hair. He had probably forgotten Jungkook was even there at this point.

"No, I was cleaning after you left," Jimin was saying.

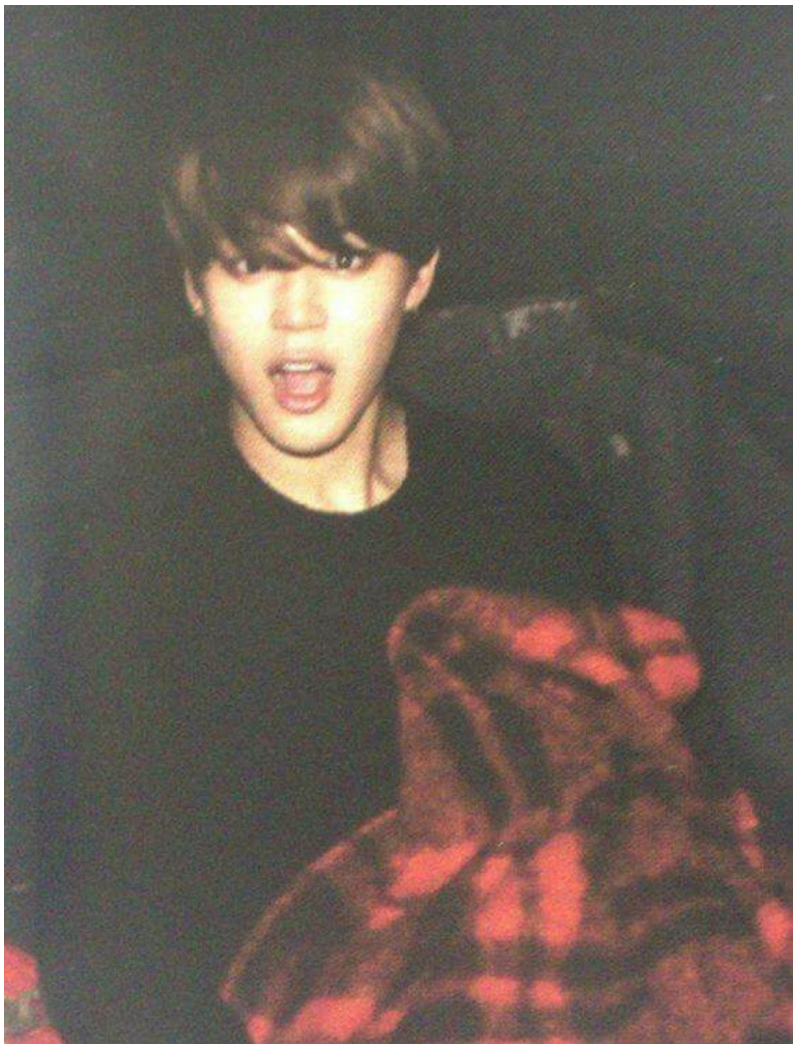
Jungkook's head turned back to look at the pictures, scouring for anything familiar in them besides Minwo's face.

"Why? I didn't do anything wrong. I just missed your-- I was exercising, I didn't hear-- No, I'm not chea-- I'm not."

Minwo holding a trophy, leaning on a golf club. Minwo standing in an open field, sun setting behind him, same girl from a few of the other pictures standing close to him, arms around his waist. Minwo with his supposed parents, chopsticks in hand and noodles hanging out of his mouth with a goofy smile. A normal person. The friend Jungkook had thought he'd had.

"I'm sorry. I'll be more careful. I won't-- Yes, I'll take my phone. I'm sorry. No, *I do* want him to come-- No, *please.* I'm sorry."

So many pictures of Minwo… until finally, Jungkook's eyes landed on one of Jimin. Probably the only one in the entire room. Jimin was illuminated by the flash of the camera, his surroundings black. His eyes were wide beneath black-brown bangs, mouth dropped open in fake shock, holding what looked to be a red, flannel blanket. He looked younger, happier, with his cheeks fuller and eyes not so tired.



Jungkook had a photo album he'd started when he was 13, had called it Golden Closet Pictures before he'd moved on to film. In the album were hundreds of captured memories of people and places and things he loved. His parents, his company, his hyungs. He'd used to add to it weekly. But he hadn't touched them since he'd lost GCF.

Because the photos you kept around you told your story, who you were, what you cared about and where you'd been. Jungkook had turned pictures into his passion, his livelihood. And just like GCP was his personal journal of things he loved, Minwo's wall was a testament of the things most important to him, the dreams he held onto.

And Jimin didn't seem to be one of them.

Jungkook distantly realized Jimin had finally hung up, was watching Jungkook quietly.

"Why aren't there any other pictures of you?" Jungkook turned towards Jimin, seeing the way the other young man was looking at the picture. And if Jungkook didn't know any better, he'd say Jimin had hate in his eyes, a certain loathing as he studied the one photo of himself on the wall. It was gone in a flash.

"It doesn't matter," Jimin muttered.

It was quiet for a moment as Jungkook looked over the wall one last time, trying not to seem so interested in the one picture of Jimin. But when he turned to look at the elder, he realized he had failed hiding his curiosity. Jimin was looking from him to the picture and back again, eyes narrowing.

“What are you really here for, Jungkook?”

Jungkook rubbed the back of his neck, turning to face Jimin. Now was a good time to leave. Never come back to this damn house. Never have to look at Minwo’s lover again. “I should get going,” he said, ignoring Jimin’s question.

“Jungkook…”

They stared at each other, a stubbornness blooming in Jungkook’s chest. He had already said enough dumb shit as it was, admitting the reason he’d given Jimin his number those few months ago. It was stupid that he was here in the first place, but he’d apologized. He hadn’t meant it, but he’d apologized. Now, it was time to leave.

“I felt bad about what I said and I was confused about what happened. That’s all. I just wanted to-”

“Did Yoongi force you to come here?” Jimin accused.

Jungkook shook his head, glaring at Jimin. “Nobody forced me to come here. Why do you think he would do that?”

Jimin was glaring right back. “I don’t know. Because he said he was going to talk to you about it or something.”

“Trust me, he did talk to me about it. But he didn’t tell me to do a damn thing.” His voice dropped lower. “I came here because I couldn’t sleep at night without thinking about you shivering on my doorstep or puking out in the snow. I felt bad about it. I’m here. I apologized. Why can’t you accept that I came on my own?”

Jimin folded his arms over his stomach, eyes flicking back to the one picture of himself on the wall. He loosed a breath, running a hand through his blonde hair. “I’ve never had someone that outright hated me find me at my house weeks later to apologize for something.”

Jungkook wanted to correct Jimin, change that statement. But he didn’t. “Well, I guess I’m different, then.” Jungkook turned to go.

“Yah, you don’t have to act like a brat.”

Jungkook knew he was hot blooded, got worked up over useless things sometimes. Along with a list of his other faults, such as being so painfully shy he couldn’t look a girl in the eyes and thinking everything was his to take, he’d learned from his hyungs not to be that way. Mostly.

“I’m not-”

“Yes, you are.”

Jungkook shut his mouth, eyes narrowing. It was strange, how Jimin sounded so much like his hyungs, the way they talked to him, how they reprimanded him. It wasn’t snide or aggressive, but stubborn with a tinge of pettiness, gentle yet firm.

“What do you want me to say?” Jungkook asked.

Jimin’s gaze flitted over Jungkook’s face, some weird electricity sparking between them as Jungkook stared back. And he wanted to take a step closer, see what Jimin would do if he closed the space between them. If the other young man would stand his ground or cower.

“You’re confusing me.”

Jungkook shrugged helplessly.

“You help me and act so kindly, and then you push me away and tell me I’m a spy. Then you come to my house, even though you’ve told me several times that you hate me and Minwo, and apologize. I just… I don’t understand you at all.”

Jungkook didn’t say anything to that. Because there was a rawness in Jimin’s countenance, a wall he’d built around himself with thorns and honey. A wall that hadn’t been there when they’d first met in the GCF lobby two years previous.

“Why did you insist I stay and then act like that? If you didn’t want me there you could’ve just told me.”

“You were sick,” Jungkook offered.

Jimin’s nose scrunched. “I *was* sick, but I could’ve just found a gas station or store to stay at for the day.”

“I wouldn’t do that to you.”

“You hate me.”

“I wouldn’t do that to *anyone,”* Jungkook breathed. “I’m not Minwo.”

Jimin flinched at the comment about his lover, and Jungkook waited, expecting a retort. But instead Jimin was quiet, looking the younger up and down, studying him. Mulling over Jungkook’s words and confusing actions. And then he looked up at the maknae, eyes bright and determined.

“I want to start over.”

Jungkook stared at him. “What?”

“I want to start over,” Jimin repeated. “I think you and I could get along well, maybe even be friends again. But I don’t want to keep talking about what happened that night, or the night of the courthouse. You haven’t brought it up much, but I know you’re still upset. Let’s forget about it.”

“Friends?” Jungkook tested, completely at a loss for words.

Jimin nodded, a spark in his eyes that Jungkook found a little distracting. “I owe you one for letting me stay, so even if you don’t want to be friends, I’m still going to find a way to make it up to you.”

“Your Minwo’s lover,” Jungkook sighed. “I don’t think we could ever be friends again. Not after how you lied to me.”

“Boyfriend,” Jimin corrected, a little annoyed. “Why do you keep calling me his lover?”

“Maybe because nobody knows about you?” Jungkook suggested, trying to keep the bite from his voice, shock still coursing through him at Jimin’s proposal of friendship. “If I was in love with someone, I wouldn’t keep them hidden. I’d let the whole world know who owned me.”

Something like shame lit Jimin’s cheeks, and he was looking back over at that singular picture of himself on the wall. “He does love me.”

Jungkook’s shoulders lifted into a soft shrug. “Doesn’t seem like it.”

“He doesn’t want to put his career in jeopardy,” Jimin tried to explain.

“At GCF? They wouldn’t care if he was gay or not.”

Jungkook knew he was hitting a sore spot when Jimin glared half-heartedly at him. “Yah, you’re being a brat again,” Jimin complained. “I retract my offer of friendship.”

“You can’t do that. It’s too late.”

“Yes, I can. I take it back.”

“No take-backs.”

“Brat,” Jimin muttered.

“Brat,” Jungkook sassed in a high pitched voice.

“That’s not what I sound like.” Jimin scowled at him for a second longer before sighing. “I just want to start over. Please?”

Jungkook crossed his arms over his chest, didn’t like the idea of having anything to do with Minwo. Still didn’t know if he could completely trust Jimin. “We can forget about that night, but I don’t know if we can be friends again.”

Jimin nodded.

Jungkook liked the way the tension seemed to ease at their agreement. He still felt uncomfortable standing in the middle of Minwo’s living room, pictures of his enemy staring at him with false smiles and fake scenes. And yet, it wasn’t so bad once his gaze also found that picture of Jimin.

“I should get going,” Jungkook suggested after a moment of awkward silence. Jimin simply nodded once more, suddenly drawn back into himself as Jungkook made for the door.

He left without another word.

Chapter End Notes

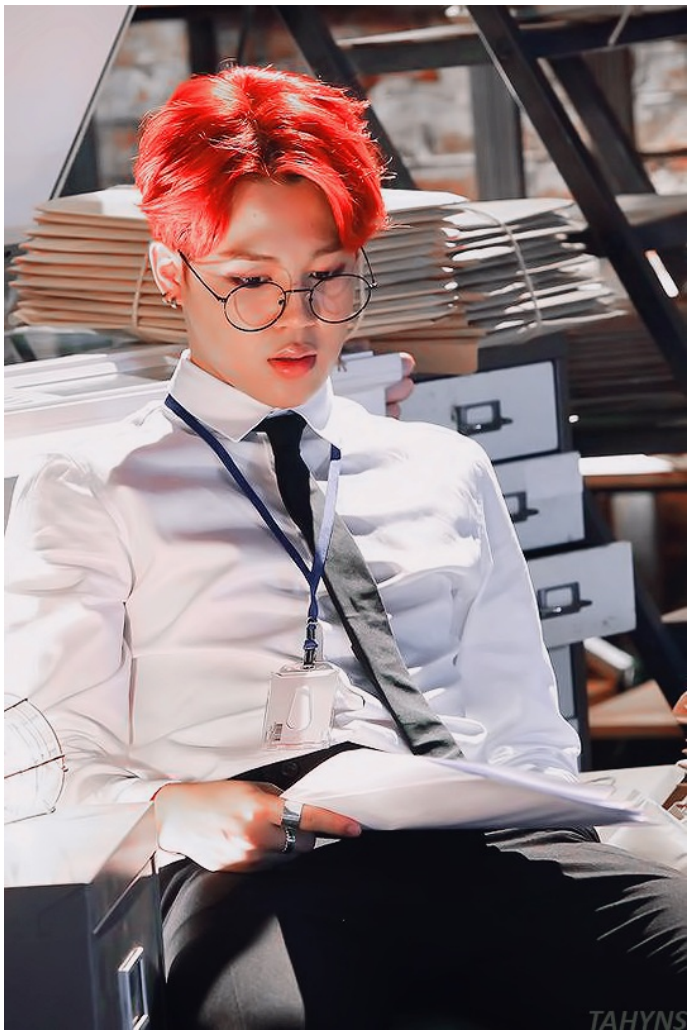
again, thank you all so much for the love and support! i love reading the comments; they really do make my day.
oh... and i also have songs for a lot of chapters. if i linked them into the story, would you guys be interested in listening as you read or something? idk they're just songs i listened to as i wrote the chapters, for mood and all that. if not, i won't; but if you all would like that, i'll go back and start linking in the songs to all the chapters i've posted so far and do it for future chapters as well

850 BPM

Chapter Notes

This is a flashback :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes



Jimin was sitting at a table by a massive wall of windows, cool, bright daylight swallowing him up as he waited. He played with his phone, zoning out the bustle of the GCF lobby, trying to ignore the looks a few people gave him as they walked past. He knew they probably didn't even spare him a fleeting thought, but he'd never been able to shut out the voice in his head that told him they did. That they were scrutinizing every little thing about him.

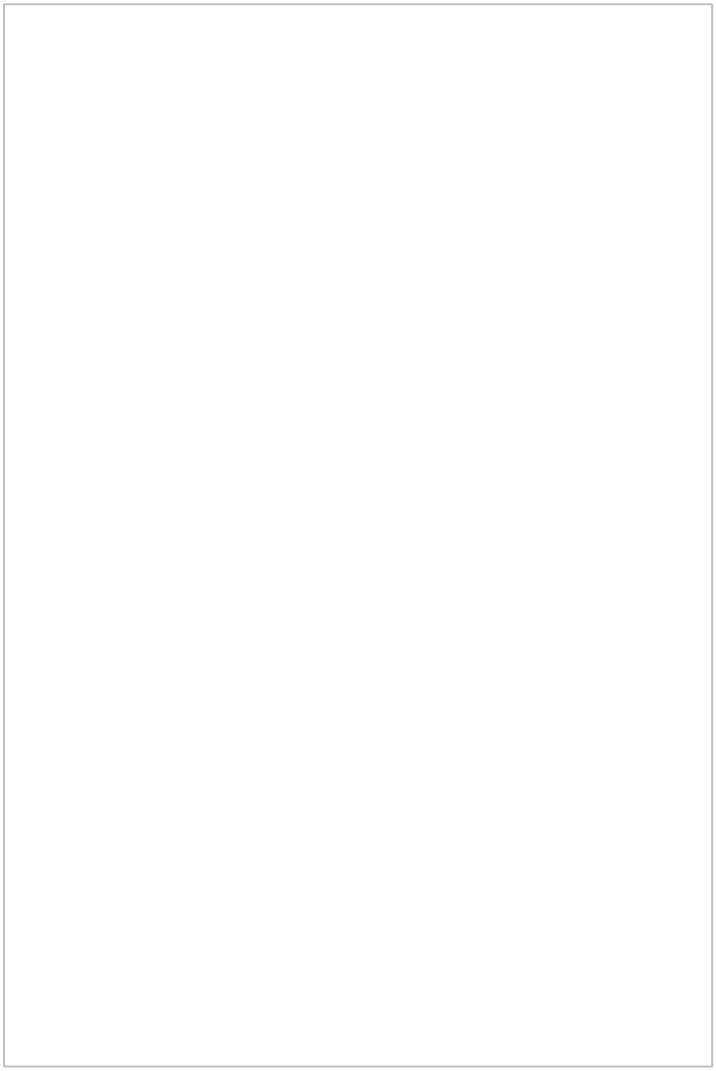
So Jimin took to staring out the window, phone clutched tightly in hand. He would get a text from Hoseok every now and then, a few from Jihyun, some from other dancers in Hope on the Street. *He replied to some of them, ignoring others, trying his best to keep his mind away from the people walking past.*

He wondered what they would think if they knew about him and Minwo. If they knew who kissed Minwo breathless during lunch breaks, who pulled him by the tie to the bedroom when he got home. He wondered what they would think if they knew who Jimin really was.

His (not very clean) thoughts were interrupted when someone sat across from him at the small table. Jimin's heart jumped a little, having thought it would've been Minwo. But the person sitting facing him wasn't Minwo at all.

Mood: Heartbeat by Suran

The guy was young, probably around Jimin's age, with brown hair parted and styled to show his forehead. His eyes were big and bright, searching and friendly. And he was fucking hot as fuck, wearing a dress shirt and tie, sitting attentively in the chair, his white shirt hugging the outline of muscle.



"I like your hair," the guy said, motioning to Jimin's dark, glossy red hair. "It's dope."

Jimin smiled, subconsciously beaming at the praise as he reached up, running a hand through it. "Thank you."

"What's your name?"

Jimin hesitated, remembering how Minwo had warned him about not telling people who he was. "Jimin."

The guy smiled, bunny-like and full, eyes creasing in the corners. "My name's Jungkook."

Jimin's entire body locked up, frozen. "Jeon Jungkook?"

Jungkook nodded, grin fading into a sheepish smile. He rubbed the back of his neck. "That's me."

Jimin bowed his head, flustered. "It's nice to meet you."

"Do you work here?" Jungkook asked, returning the bow.

Jimin shook his head. "No. I'm just waiting for someone."

"Ah," Jungkook nodded to himself. "Your girlfriend?"

A smile tugged at Jimin's lips as he shook his head. "I don't have a girlfriend. Or a boyfriend." Because it was true. He didn't. Minwo had set their relationship at strictly sexual; Minwo flirted with other people all the time, sometimes right in front of Jimin.

"Are you from around here?"

"No," Jimin admitted. "I'm living in Incheon right now. Obviously you're from Busan?"

Jungkook grinned. "Yeah. I guess I need to work on the Seoul accent still."

Jimin shook his head. "It sounds pretty good."

"So, why the red hair?"

Jimin shrugged. "Why not?"

Jungkook laughed a little. "Fair enough, I guess. It looks really good on you."

Jimin tried not to blush, or even think about blushing. Sometimes he wished Minwo would compliment him like this, but that just wasn't Minwo's personality. "Thank you," Jimin muttered, a little too shy all of the sudden. He didn't even know why he was talking to Jungkook. Minwo had always made sure Jimin avoided him at all costs, despite how highly he spoke of the young CEO. "I like your hair, too."

Jungkook thanked him, playing with his sleeve, running his fingers over the buttons on his cuff. He seemed nervous, antsy, and he wouldn't stop fidgeting. It was a little endearing, the way he couldn't sit still. Jimin was beginning to see why Minwo liked this guy so much.

"Do you like coffee?" Jungkook asked shyly, staring at his hands.

Jimin's heart spiked with adrenaline, not knowing what to do. He didn't know why Jungkook was asking; they'd only just met. But he did know Minwo would be pissed as hell if he caught Jimin taking Jungkook up on his offer. Relationship or no, Minwo didn't like people hanging around Jimin.

Jimin shook his head. "Not really. I don't really drink anything except water." It was a dumb thing to lie about, but maybe Jungkook would get the hint and leave before Minwo came back.

"Oh," Jungkook breathed, and if Jimin didn't know better, he'd say the GCF's young CEO was

blushing a little. “I could get you a glass of water, then?”

Jimin couldn’t keep the small smile from perking up his lips. His vision squinted with his eye smile, and the panic in his chest lessened a little bit. It was just water, nothing for Minwo to get upset over…. and how could Jimin say no to such a cute face?

Jungkook stood from his seat, and Jimin watched as he walked over to a water cooler that was tucked into a corner of the room, every single employee that passed greeting him. Jungkook filled a cup with water, dipping his head in acknowledgement as people said hello, asking him how his day was, if they could do anything for him.

Jungkook eventually made it back to Jimin’s little table by the windows, setting a glass of water in front of him, having also gotten one for himself. He sipped at his, smiling the whole time, and Jimin couldn’t keep his eyes off of him.

Jimin had worked various minimum wage jobs before, had worked in an office for only a few months at one point, but had quit. While working there, he’d learned the hierarchy of an office building, and a CEO so casually strolling through the halls, kindly smiling at all his employees and returning their greetings? It wasn’t normal. It wasn’t what the high-up business men Jimin had known acted like.

One of his foster parents had been in the big business industry. She’d been cold and distant, looking down her nose at everyone, including and especially Jimin. He’d run away from her, too. But Jungkook seemed oddly open for someone in his position.

“You have a nice smile,” Jungkook complimented.

Jimin hadn’t realized he’d been smiling. “Do you always get water for random strangers you find in your building?”

Jungkook laughed a little, leaning forward a bit. “What kind of person would I be if I let someone get dehydrated?”

Jimin ran a hand through his dark red hair, shaking his head, grinning. “Does that happen here often?”

“No. Because I give people water.”

Jimin let another laugh bubble from his chest.

“I don’t just get anyone drinks, though,” Jungkook assured him.

“No?”

Jungkook shook his head, suddenly looking gravely serious. “Absolutely not. Only for people with red hair.”

“Do you?”

“Yes.”

“And how often do you meet people with red hair like mine?”

Jungkook tilted his head to the side, looking up, eyebrows creased as he thought. “I guess… yeah, I guess you’re the first.”

Jimin looked at Jungkook with a raised brow, playful smile tugging at his lips. “And what if I had pink hair?”

“I’d want to see that.”

“And how much do you want to see it?”

“Don’t you hear my heartbeat?” Jungkook asked.

Jimin’s brows quirked up, eyes slotting into crescents as he grinned. “How can I hear it?”

“It’s about 850 BPM.”

Jimin threw his head back in a full-bodied laugh, shoulders shaking against the back of the chair, almost falling out of it. He had to put his cup of water down to keep from spilling it, only laughing harder at the serious, bambi-eyed look on Jungkook’s face.



“850 BPM?”

“Yes.”

“A human-being’s heartbeat?”

“It’s not human speed. My heart is pounding that fast.”

“Over pink hair?”

Jungkook just grinned. Jimin knew it wasn’t that funny, but he’d always been one to laugh easily. And the expression on Jungkook’s face, it was too much for Jimin to keep his laugh contained.

“You have a nice laugh, too.”

Jimin’s laugh bubbled down and he resisted the urge to roll his eyes. Instead leaned forward, resting a hand on his fist as he studied the young CEO a bit more.

“You like my laugh?”

Jungkook nodded, suddenly unable to look Jimin in the eye. And Jimin thought it was the cutest thing in the world. They ended up talking for what seemed like an hour, sipping at their cups of water and laughing together. And it made Jimin feel warm and happy and fuzzy inside, how genuine Jeon Jungkook was.

“Jungkook-ah,” Jimin heard in the middle of an animated story the young CEO was telling him. And the voice, it immediately made him freeze, laugh dying in his throat.

Jungkook’s head swivelled to the side, looking up at the person who was standing a few feet away from the table. “Hyung,” Jungkook said warmly, eyes lighting up a little.

Minwo returned his smile, eyes flicking to Jimin for a split second before remaining locked on Jungkook, pretending like the red-head didn’t exist. “Namjoon needs to speak to you.”

Jungkook sighed, pouting a little. “Alright, alright.” He looked back at Jimin, offering him a small smile. “It was nice talking to you. I hope I’ll see you around.”

Jimin bowed his head quickly, not looking Jungkook in the eye. Focused on the cup in his hands. Jungkook got up from his chair, patting Minwo on the shoulder before walking past him to the stairwells, pulling out his phone. Disappeared before Jimin had time to process anything.

Minwo grabbed Jimin’s arm a little roughly, and Jimin could tell he was frustrated. “Why were you talking to him?”

Jimin stared up at Minwo. “He came up and started talking to me. I was just sitting here.”

Minwo seemed to mull the information around in his head for a moment before he nodded, smile blooming across his lips. Jimin thought Minwo looked handsome like this, wearing a suit and tie, pitch black hair and dark brown eyes glowing in the light from the window.

“Let’s go get lunch,” Jimin suggested, though he knew they wouldn’t be doing much eating.

Minwo’s eyes turned dark as he tugged Jimin up from his chair, glass of water forgotten, hurrying out to the car. He’d have to text Hoseok that he’d be late to dance practice.

Jungkook jogged up the stairs, phone in hand as he texted Namjoon. Adrenaline was spiking through his whole body, his legs going a little numb and shaky. Because he’d done it. He’d talked to the cute boy that waited in the lobby almost every other day. He’d flirted and hadn’t stuttered or run away, hadn’t frozen like a deer in headlights.

I did it, *he thought.* I fucking did it. I talked to the cutest guy I’ve ever seen.

Jimin, the guy's name was Jimin.

He hadn't been lying when he said his heartbeat was going 850 BPM. Well, that's what it felt like anyways. He was sure Jimin could hear his heartbeat, had logically thought everyone had superhuman hearing at the moment, so he'd made a joke out of it.

God, Jimin's laugh. It was gorgeous. And that red hair, Jungkook had never seen anything like it. Thought Jimin would look good in pink hair. Tried to imagine it, Jimin having hair the color of cotton candy.

Damn.

"What are you grinning about?"

Jungkook tried to wipe the grin off his face as he saw Namjoon just down the hall, tablet in hand, showing off his dimples as he saw the maknae. Jungkook pulled out the keycard to his personal office and swiped it in front of the door lock. It beeped, the heavy lock clicking.

"I don't know what you're talking about, hyung," Jungkook said, the smile blooming even bigger.

"You look like you just won a Daesang," Namjoon joked.

They both entered Jungkook's personal office, closing the door behind them. "Me winning a Daesang? In what universe?"

Namjoon shook his head, smiling. "You're always up to something. What is it this time?"

Jungkook shrugged nonchalantly, strolling over to his desk. "Nothing, hyung."

"You're not very good at hiding your feelings, Jungkook-ah. What happened?"

Jungkook shoved his hands in his pockets, staring down at the floor, unable to look his hyung in the eye. "You remember that guy with the red hair I've been telling you about? The one that waits in the lobby?" Jungkook didn't have to look up to see that his hyung was grinning. "I finally talked to him. And we… we flirted."

Namjoon laughed. Dimples, dimples, dimples. "You? You flirted *with someone?"*

Jungkook nodded, feeling a little defensive, finally looking up into Namjoon's mirthful eyes. "I can flirt, hyung."

Namjoon held up his hands in mock surrender. "I'm not saying you can't flirt. I'm just surprised because you've been talking about this guy for a month."

Jungkook shrugged, playing with the cuff on his sleeve. "He's cute."

"Did you get his number?"

Jungkook's eyes widened, his mind going blank with static as his mouth drop open the tiniest bit. "Shit."

Namjoon laughed so hard he slapped the desk, buckling over and wheezing. Jungkook watched his hyung with an embarrassed, half-lidded glare, waiting for Namjoon to stop choking on his laughs. And when Namjoon was finally done, he patted Jungkook's shoulder, plopping down in a chair on the other side of Jungkook's desk. "You'll get there someday, Jungkook-ah."

Jungkook pouted a little, frustration curling through his head. He always forgot something. Who forgot to get someone's number? That was like the number one rule for flirting with someone… or at least, he thought it was? Either way, he knew Jimin was probably gone by now, and it was three floors down so he shouldn't even bother running through his building to catch Jimin.

But maybe he'd see Jimin again. Maybe he'd get his chance. But for now, he had work to do, presentations to plan, and meetings to schedule. He had a company to run, and all the passion and drive in the world to do it.

Mood: About Us by JOY.

Jimin peered at Minwo through the darkness of the room as the man got up from the bed, throwing a used condom away. Jimin was panting, face flushed, body burning as he came down from his high. Watched as Minwo approached the bed again. And he was so handsome, Jimin thought.

~~*Not as handsome as Jungkook.*~~

"Here," Minwo said, tossing a rag onto Jimin's stretched out body.

Jimin tried not to let the callousness rub off on him, could tell there was something bothering Minwo. But for now, he didn't ask. Just grabbed the rag, cleaning himself up. It was a few moments of silence as they sat there, and Jimin wasn't sure if he should consider it a comfortable quiet or not.

Minwo was sitting on the edge of the bed, hands clasped, looking deep in thought. Jimin shifted a little, the sheets rustling, and Minwo's head snapped up, eyes locking on the dancer in the sheets. "So you met Jungkook… how was it?"

Jimin blinked at Minwo, eyes narrowing the tiniest bit. That was a week ago, and he'd only seen Jungkook one more time in the lobby. They'd talked for a few minutes before Jungkook was called away for something, and Jimin felt a little flutter in his chest thinking about the young CEO. "Good? I guess… I don't know. He's exactly like you described him. He's really nice."

Minwo hadn't brought up the fact that Jimin had been blatantly flirting with the young CEO, hadn't even mentioned Jungkook until now. Jimin hadn't thought Minwo would still be thinking about it.

"Min-ah… I thought you and I... I thought we were a couple."

Jimin's mind went blank, his head spinning a little. "What?"

Minwo rubbed the back of his neck, almost shy. "I thought you were mine."

Jimin sat up, blinking at Minwo. "You said it was just sex. You flirt with other people all the time."

Minwo reached out, gently taking Jimin's wrist in his large hand. Brought it up to his mouth, kissing the soft skin of his pulse. "But I want you. I want you all to myself. I thought you were my boyfriend."

Jimin's heart thumped and stuttered and twisted in his chest. "If I thought we were boyfriends, I wouldn't have flirted with him. You didn't tell me you wanted us to be exclusive."

Minwo shrugged a little, lips travelling up the inside of Jimin's forearm, sending shivers down Jimin's spine. "I thought that was a given."

Jimin swallowed hard, heat spreading through his chest. "You want that? You want to be boyfriends?"

Minwo nodded, closing his eyes for a moment. "More than anything. I want you to be mine and no one else's."

"Okay," Jimin whispered, a little hesitant. "Okay. I want that, too."

A warm smile spread over Minwo's mouth, and he leaned forward, pecking Jimin's lips. "Fuck, Min-ah. You don't even know what you do to me."

A shot of heat zagged through Jimin's body. "Show me, then. Show me what I do to you."

Minwo's eyes darkened. "Promise me. Promise you'll only be mine."

Jimin nodded, a little distracted by Minwo's-- his boyfriend's-- hand smoothing up his thigh. "I'm yours."

"And stay away from Jungkook. Promise me that, too."

Through the lust-induced fog in Jimin's head, a part of him didn't like that. Didn't want to agree. He thought back to how funny and kind Jungkook was. And even though they'd flirted, did he really have to stay away from the young CEO completely? Couldn't they be friends?

~~Friends don't flirt like that . Don't look into each other's eyes. Don't make each other's hearts beat with rose tinted electricity.~~

"I only met him a week ago, Minwo-ssi."

Minwo pushed Jimin back into the sheets, crawling on top of the dancer. Nipped a line across his shoulder. "We only met each other a month ago. Only met once before hooking up."

Jimin threaded his fingers through Minwo's hair, a little agitated deep down. But looking up into Minwo's eyes, seeing the alluring darkness in them, Jimin thought he could see himself with Minwo. Could see them being happy together. And with that thought, Jimin's heart started beating a little harder.

~~It wasn't beating 850 BPM, though.~~

"I'm yours, Minwo-ssi. I'm yours."

And that was all it took for Minwo to start fucking Jimin into oblivion.

Chapter End Notes

i cry myself to sleep at night because of how gorgeous jimin is with red hair. and jungkook, what a cute baby bun. ugh i cry every time.
i hope you liked the music :D i'll work on getting the music linked into the chapters i've already posted, too.

a good and bad to anything

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"That's why you were so mad that night," Hayoon observed.

Jungkook nodded, folding his arms over his chest, leaning back against the cool wood of the park bench. He was watching as the sun slowly melted snow from the skeletal trees and walkways, watching the brown grass swell with water. "He called me of all people to ask for help. He wants to be friends again."

"That's great," Hayoon suggested, making Jungkook's head whip over to look at her. Her glossy black hair was pulled up into a messy bun, slim figure enveloped in a red coat, paired with a black beanie, black gloves, and a black scarf. Her small hands were wrapped around a cup of coffee.

"I can't trust him."

"Yeah, but think about the opportunities," Hayoon said, small smirk tugging at her lips. She quirked a brow, mimicking Jungkook's expression. Sipped at her coffee for a second. "Minwo doesn't know you two have been talking, right?"

Jungkook shook his head. "Not to my knowledge."

Hayoon reached over and lightly gripped Jungkook's wrist, looking at him with beaming eyes, determined. "We both know you're innocent, Jungkookie. And Minwo's somehow convinced everyone that you beat… you beat her badly enough to put her in a coma. But if he has a secret lover he beats all the time, all you'd have to do-- Oh, don't give me that look. Hear me out."

Jungkook sighed, gesturing for her to continue, Yoongi's warnings ringing in the back of his mind.

"All you'd have to do is get evidence of what Minwo does to this guy. Photos, maybe some videos. Expose it to the media. Not only will that provide enough evidence to launch a full on investigation into Minwo, but you might even get your company back until they find him guilty."

Jungkook found himself thinking it over. Gathering evidence and exposing it to the media… cruel, but effective. It would be Minwo's downfall, Jungkook thought, the image of Jimin's battered body playing in the maknae's mind.

It was brutal, though. Jungkook knew there was a certain amount of trust Jimin had put in him, asking to stay over in the first place. And the way Jimin had crawled right back to Minwo… how he'd insisted time and time again that Minwo did love him and that he wasn't a lover, but his boyfriend… it would really hurt Jimin. Humiliate him, even, if Jungkook were to leak photos or videos of the things Minwo did.

But it would *really* hurt Minwo. And maybe, for once, Jungkook wanted to win. He wanted to get the upper hand and tug the world out from under Minwo's feet, pull him off his high horse. He knew his hyung's would disapprove… but he couldn't think about that right now.

The longer he thought about it, the more appealing the plan sounded.

"I'll think about it."

Mood: All the Same by Nick Wilson

Jimin laid sprawled across Jihyun's lap, happily staring up at the familiar face of his younger brother. Two years' difference didn't mean much to Jimin; they'd always been as close as they could. Well, up until the last year or so when he'd moved in with Minwo.

Minwo didn't seem to mind Jihyun, though. Still didn't like Jimin talking to him too much, but tolerated the younger brother more than he tolerated any of Jimin's other friends or family. And for that, Jimin was thankful.

Jihyun was typing away on his phone, the TV on for once (Minwo didn't like Jimin watching TV; he said it wasn't good for the eyes, was a waste of time) and cartoons were playing idly in the background. But Jimin wasn't watching the TV. He was studying the outline of Jihyun's face, so similar to his own: rounded, with the same hooded eyes and thick black hair he'd once had before he'd started dyeing it.

It had been a nervewracking wait, Jimin pacing back and forth, afraid Minwo had made good on his threat and cancelled the train ticket. But then Jihyun had been getting out of the taxi, and Jimin had run outside, bare feet and all, icy cold cement stinging his toes. But he hadn't even noticed. Had thrown his arms around his younger brother's neck, just holding him until the younger was complaining, making fake gagging sounds, pretending he was choking.

And now, now Jimin didn't think he could ever be as happy as he was right then. He reached up and played with the one piercing in Jihyun's right ear, eye smile squinting his vision. "This is new. When did you get it?"

Jihyun looked past his phone, smile tugging at his mouth. "A couple months ago. I figured I should follow in your footsteps and get a dozen piercings in each ear."

Jimin lightly smacked Jihyun's neck. "You brat. Seriously. I only have a few."

Jihyun smiled, poking Jimin's stomach. Frowned when his finger met nothing but firm, hollow muscle where there used to be a soft tummy. He quickly hid the frown when Jimin's eye smile dimmed a little, though it was still beaming and happy and glowing with joy.

"We should go to the beach," Jihyun suggested.

Jimin shifted nervously on his younger brother's lap. Hesitated. "I'll have to ask Minwo."

Jihyun wrinkled his nose, running a lazy hand through his brother's hair. "Why? Isn't he in Japan?"

Jimin was tired, tired of explaining the same thing over and over. Minwo didn't like this, didn't like that. Wouldn't let Jimin leave the house unless given permission or kicked out. Sometimes he felt like he was in a prison. "He just worries about me."

Jihyun forced a smile on his face. "Not as much as I worry about you."

Jimin huffed. "You worry too much."

"I haven't seen you in months, Jiminie."

"Hyunie~" Jimin whined. "You know I don't travel well."

There was a heavy pause, his younger brother's eyes growing sad, edging on desperate. "You're turning into mom and dad…"

Jimin immediately stiffened. "I'm not like them."

Jihyun sighed. "I know. But you used to visit me every weekend."

Jimin turned his head away, finally focusing on the blaring cartoon playing on the TV. The silly figures were blowing things up and saving the day, and he wished he could be in that world instead. Everything so black and white, good and bad so distinct. None of this grey bullshit that clouded every inch of his life.

"I don't have a job anymore, Hyunie. I can't afford to travel every weekend."

Jihyun was running his hand through Jimin's platinum blond hair again. "Why'd you quit? I thought you liked working at Tony's."

"I did," Jimin assured him quickly. "I loved Tony. He was awesome."

"Then why'd you quit? Did something happen at work?"

Jimin finally looked up at his brother, turning his attention away from the TV. Focused on the desperate glint in Jihyun's eyes; he didn't like that he was causing his brother stress. Guilt swelled in his chest, aching and sharp. "No, no. I just… couldn't work there anymore."

Because Minwo hadn't liked how much Jimin had looked up to Tony. Hadn't liked the way Tony had started asking about bruises, about the long sleeves Jimin wore under his work shirt in the middle of summer to hide scratches and red marks. Minwo hadn't liked all the questions. So he'd cut Tony out of Jimin's life, too.

Jihyun hummed, went back to playing with his phone.

Jimin sighed, sitting up from his brother's lap, deciding to take a risk. He prayed Minwo wouldn't be asking for pictures this afternoon. "Let's go."

Jihyun smiled warmly, shoving Jimin's shoulder lightly. "Knew you couldn't resist. You love the beaches back home in Busan."

A hurt, icy and cutting, spiked through Jimin's chest, glass dragging through arteries. He missed Busan and Jihyun and his childhood friends so much. He distantly thought about how Jungkook had slipped up once or twice, exposing a Busan accent.

"I'll go get dressed," Jimin said, motioning to his shorts. He stood from the couch, throwing Jihyun one last grin, heart pounding, before jogging up the spiral staircase.

Minwo didn't have to know.

Jungkook bounced on his heels, standing before the same maroon door he'd sworn never to look at again only a few days before. Sighed, rolling his eyes at himself, again looking up at that shockingly blue sky. He didn't know what the hell he was thinking.

Minwo was in Japan for the month for important business meetings involving GCF. Jungkook knew as much from what Namjoon had told him, and also from the news articles confirming

Minwo had left the country, talking more about the ongoing investigation. So Jungkook felt a lot less nervous standing on his enemy's doorstep.

He puffed out a breath of air, watching as it froze away from him, dissipating. Raised his fist and knocked a few times. He was surprised when the door opened quickly, unlike last time where he'd waited a few minutes. And this time, it was black hair he saw. And it wasn't Jimin.

Jungkook nearly had a panic attack, thinking it was Minwo. That all of his sources were wrong. That Minwo had tricked an entire nation and a multi-million dollar company into thinking he was in a different country. But it wasn't Minwo, either.

It was like a different version of Jimin. Pretty much the exact same height, with the same eyes and nose. But the lips were different and the jaw wasn't as sharp, features weren't as delicate . He wasn't as pretty as Jimin-- was more masculine, honestly.

"Is Jimin home?" Jungkook asked as lightly as he could.

The guy in front of him looked the maknae up and down, clutching a black smart phone in his hand, hesitant and protective. "Yeah, why?"

"Can I talk to him?" Jungkook asked.

The young man studied him for another second before he seemed to deem Jungkook safe, turning his head to the side. "Jiminie! Someone's here for you!"

Jungkook heard a voice call back faintly from upstairs that it would be a minute. Couldn't keep the surprise off his face, couldn't stop himself from studying the stranger out of curiosity. The way the young man called for Jimin was casual, meaning they had to be close.

Warmth enveloped Jungkook as the young man let him in, a relief from the brisk, bone chilling cold outside. Jungkook knew it must be Jimin's brother, honestly hadn't really thought Jimin had any family.

"What's your name?" Jimin's maybe-brother asked.

"Jungkook. And you?"

Something sparked in the guy's eyes. "Jihyun. I'm Jimin's younger brother."

Jungkook nodded, having guessed correctly. They looked too similar to be anything but siblings, though different enough that he hadn't thought they were twins or anything. There was a youth about Jihyun, innocence clinging to his shoulders in a way it didn't with Jimin. Jimin had a softness to him, yes, but there was a consuming darkness in his eyes that he didn't share with Jihyun.

"Nice to meet you. I didn't know Jimin had a younger brother."

Jihyun shrugged. "I live in Busan."

And Jungkook could hear it, the Busan satoori. It was so natural to him that he hadn't really thought about it until the other admitted he was from the same city Jungkook was born in. But why didn't Jimin have a Busan accent?

"That's where I'm from. Do you live with your parents?"

Jihyun's entire demeanor shifted, as if realizing something about Jungkook by that question. "No, I uh, I haven't seen my parents in about eight years."

Jungkook shifted. "Oh." Were Jimin's parents dead? Awkwardness tugged at Jungkook's chest, and he started playing with his hands, not knowing exactly what to say. Why was Jimin taking so damn long?

"Jimin's mentioned you a few times. It's been a while, though."

Jungkook shrugged, trying not to let his mind ponder on what exactly that could mean. He didn't want to know, not anymore. "It's just recently that we started talking again."

Jihyun nodded thoughtfully, glancing at the spiral staircase, probably hoping Jimin would hurry the fuck up and save them both from this awkwardness. But Jimin was still walking around upstairs, Jungkook hearing a dresser open and close a few times, footsteps pacing back and forth.

"He takes forever to get ready. We were just about to go to the beach."

Jungkook was about to say something when they both heard footsteps on the spiral staircase.

Mood: Broken Roots by Michl

Jimin was wearing a heavy black coat, not zipped up yet, paired with a black shirt, blue jeans, and black boots. He froze in his tracks as his eyes focused on Jungkook, blinked as if he thought the maknae was a figment of his imagination.

"Jungkook?"

Jungkook's gaze flitted between Jihyun and Jimin, catching all of the differences, the many similarities. "Hey, Jimin-hyung."

Jimin's eyes narrowed, a suspicious frown tugging at his lips. "So now you start with the honorifics?"

Jungkook shrugged innocently, eyes flitting back to the Jihyun, who was wandering away, probably relieved. Typing away on his phone, sitting on the couch. "Figured now was as good a time as any to start. Isn't that right, hyung?"

Jimin rolled his eyes, exasperated. "You confuse me too much."

"I didn't know you would have a friend over, Jiminie. I would've gotten two piercings to try and impress them," Jihyun chimed with a sly smirk.

Jimin's nose scrunched at the younger, who just smiled and went back to staring at his phone. "Go get ready if you're going to be a brat, Hyunie."

Jihyun grinned before standing from the couch, still typing away on his phone, heading downstairs. "I don't take an hour, unlike you."

"Shut up," Jimin called after Jihyun, who turned his head just before he disappeared down the stairs and stuck his tongue out. "Aish, that kid," Jimin muttered, shaking his head.

But it wasn't annoyance in Jimin's voice. No, it was something absolutely pure and light, something completely fond. As if Jihyun was the best thing in Jimin's life. As if he *couldn't* feel anything but love for the kid. And Jungkook wondered when the last time Jimin had looked at

someone like that was.

~~Jimin certainly didn't look at Minwo like that.~~

"I just swung by to see what you were up to," Jungkook said, looking Jimin up and down once more. "But I guess you're going to the beach or something, so I won't keep you any longer."

Jimin shook his head, carding his fingers through his platinum blond hair. "No, it's fine. As much as Jihyun denies it, he takes just as long as I do to get ready."

"I didn't know you had a brother," Jungkook admitted.

Jimin laughed a little, eyes squinting and nose scrunching. "There's a lot you don't know about me."

The corner of Jungkook's mouth quirked up into a smile, and he tilted his head to the side. "Is that a good thing or a bad thing?"

Jimin shrugged his shoulders lightly. "Depends. There's a good and bad to anything."

Jungkook paused for a moment, eyes involuntarily flicking over to the singular picture of Jimin on the wall. "I guess I came here cause I've been thinking about what you said the other day. About being friends again."

"I retracted that offer," Jimin pointed out.

Jungkook scoffed. "You want to be my friend. Admit it. You think I'm cool."

Jimin swatted Jungkook's arm, an action so familiar from his hyungs that he almost forgot who Jimin actually was. "I thought you hated me."

Jungkook grimaced. "I'm working on that."

Jimin seemed to wilt a little at that, the fact that Jungkook didn't exactly like him yet. But wasn't going leave himself open and bare to be betrayed again. He'd done that one too many times, had always let people in too easily. He wasn't here to stop hating Jimin, he was here to get evidence.

"You want to come with us?" Jimin suddenly asked.

Jungkook's brows drew together. "Don't you want to spend time with your brother?"

Jimin shrugged. "I have him for the next few weeks. In the meantime, I have to convince you to stop hating me." Jungkook didn't deny it, instead just nodded. "How's… how's Jin-hyung?"

Jungkook couldn't help the jealousy that prickled down his spine. Didn't like thinking about how Jimin had cuddled with his eldest hyung all day. Didn't like it because Jimin wasn't safe; he couldn't be trusted. And Jungkook didn't want to share his hyungs with someone who would hurt them.

Jimin paused, eyes flitting around Jungkook's face, studying him. Thinking. It was a moment before he said, "Is that why you got all huffy when I was around your hyungs?"

"Huffy?"

"Because you were jealous?"

Jungkook was fidgeting with his hands again, bouncing up and down on the pads of his feet. “I don’t get jealous.”

“Yes, you do. You accused me of being a manipulative spy because I slept on Jin-hyung’s lap.”

Jungkook’s nose scrunched. Looked to the side, poking his tongue into the side of his cheek, head tilted as he scoffed.

“See. That look-- right there. You’re jealous.”

Jungkook rolled his eyes. “I’m just a little… hesitant… after everything that’s happened. You’re Minwo’s lo-” Jimin cut him off with a sharp look. “Boyfriend. I had a right to be a little wary, especially after... after what happened in the courthouse.”

“I thought we agreed to move past everything.”

“You can’t expect me to just forget about it.”

Jimin sighed, nodding. Was quiet for a moment, looking like he might apologize for what he’d said that fateful night, what he'd done. But he didn’t; Jungkook didn’t really expect him to. That bridge had burned. God, had it burned.

“Are you coming or not?”

Jungkook’s eyes darted around Minwo’s house, strangely less threatening with Minwo gone. Looked back at Jimin, Hayoon’s words echoing in the back of his head.

All you’d have to do is get evidence of what Minwo does to this guy.

“Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Thoughts? Feelings? Impressions?
This is really where the story started to pick up for me, where it actually starts getting good (in my opinion)... I've read over these first ten chapters about a thousand times, changing and editing and rewriting, and I really was super sick of them so I'm really excited to get to this new plot point and how it changes everything. Anyways, I hope you enjoyed! Thanks for hanging in there with me, and especially to my regulars who leave me comments every time I update. You guys are awesome!!

what's tasty in busan

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Fickle Game by Amber Run

Jimin didn't see Jungkook for another two weeks. The afternoon at the beach had been a little awkward at first, but strangely enough Jihyun and Jungkook got along fairly well. Jimin had even gotten them both to wade into the icy cold water on a dare. Jungkook had then found a long, eel-looking fish and chased Jimin down with it, scaring the shit out of him.

It was strange, how friendly Jungkook had been. How open and fun and genuine he seemed. Even after what Jimin had done, the maknae was trying to put the past behind them. And that was something that was making guilt swallow Jimin whole.

He still hadn't apologized. For everything. For the lies, for what he'd said, for what he'd done. But he couldn't bring himself to, not yet.

Jimin was currently on the phone with Minwo, convincing his boyfriend that he was actually at home (him and Jihyun had decided to go to Tony's frozen yogurt shop). It was strange, Jimin thought, how it was getting harder and harder for him to justify Minwo's actions, his rules, his calls. Mainly because of Jihyun, because of his younger brother's worried looks and disapproving frowns and pressing words.

(You don't deserve this, Jiminie. You don't deserve to be treated like his pet.

I'm not his pet. He's just worried about me.

He's worried about himself.

Hyunie~

I don't like him, and I don't like these phone calls. He's not good to you.

I love him.

Does he love you?)

Jimin hung up as soon as he convinced Minwo he wasn't cheating. As soon as he made up more lies, more excuses so that he wouldn't get caught leaving the house. Minwo would be furious if he found out. He always was; when had he not been?

"Hey, Chim Chim," a voice called, warm grin on his face, showing his pearly white teeth. "What do you think of the strawberry yogurt?"

Jimin smiled a cheek-splitting smile at Tony, nothing but pure idolization in his gaze. "It was really good."

"It's a new recipe I'm trying out. Just for a little bit, though."

Jimin's smile was glowing as he finished his sample spoon of the frozen strawberry yogurt. "I like how it's not so sweet anymore."

Tony nodded, turning back to his dishes. “You can have your job back any time, Chim Chim. You know that, right?”

Jimin’s smile wilted a little, Minwo’s twisted face flashing in the back of his mind. He desperately wanted his old job back. Had loved working for Tony, had been overpaid for only scooping ice cream and managing the frozen yogurt machines. But he’d loved every second of it. During the days he’d worked at Tony’s, and at night he’d worked with Hoseok’s dance crew, also attending University and working as a barista.

But Minwo didn’t like Tony.

“I know. Maybe someday. Thank you, though,” Jimin forced out, a pressure building up in his chest with every word.

“Alright, Chim Chim. Just know I worry about you, okay?”

Jimin nodded. “I’m doing good, Tony.”

Tony’s eyes were sad as they looked back at Jimin, hands stilling on the dishes. “You’re a good kid. I’m always here if you need me.”

Tony was more of a father to him than his own blood father had been. Honestly thought of Tony’s face whenever somebody asked. Jimin knew Tony was worried about him, desperately wanted to get his job back... He wasn’t sure what to say, not knowing how to say anything anymore, when the bell dinged and Jimin glanced at the door out of pure habit from his days working there.

His heart stuttered, adrenaline spiking through him. Because it was Jeon Jungkook, wearing a black face mask and red beanie, along with a navy blue coat and ripped jeans. Looked so natural and calm walking through the door, someone else tagging along behind him.



Jimin's gaze flicked to who he remembered was Taehyung. He'd only talked to the other 95'er that day weeks ago, and the guy was odd... but strangely charming at the same time.

"Jimin?" Jungkook asked, finally realizing Jimin was there.

"Hey, Jungkook," Jimin greeted awkwardly, a little relieved when Jihyun stepped forward and said hello to Jungkook, too.

"I didn't think I'd see you guys here," Jungkook admitted, looking from Jimin to Jihyun, gaze flitting to Tony, who was washing his hands in the back.

"I, uh… I used to work here," Jimin muttered, running a hand through his hair.

Jungkook hummed, a little surprised. "Really?"

"Yeah, about a year and a half ago." Before he'd moved in with Minwo. Before his boyfriend had started cutting everyone out of his life.

"Jimin, right?" Taehyung asked.

Jimin smiled lightly. "Yeah. And this is my brother, Jihyun."

Tae smiled a boxy smile, bowing politely. He looked to Jungkook, who was staring at Jimin. Nudged the maknae with his shoulder. "Have you guys ordered yet?"

Jimin shook his head. "Not yet."

“We should eat together.”

Jungkook shifted, rubbing his hands together, still staring at Jimin. “I’m sure they have places to be.”

“Nah, let’s eat together,” Jihyun spoke up. “We don’t have anywhere to be, right Jiminie?”

Jimin sighed, feeling the awkward tension rolling from Jungkook’s shoulders into the air. It was obvious the maknae hadn’t been expecting to run into Jimin so soon, didn’t know how to act since their confirmed truce, since that day at the beach. “I guess not.” He supposed it wouldn’t hurt. He had, after all, just spent twenty minutes convincing Minwo he was at home. He wasn’t going to let it be for nothing.

They all ordered, Tony “forgetting” to charge Jimin and Jihyun for their frozen yogurts. Jimin hadn’t even argued it, knew Tony would get his way no matter what. And sitting at the booth, Jihyun next to him and Jungkook and Taehyung across from him, Jimin found eating the frozen treat a lot more difficult than usual.

He didn’t say much. He’d used to love talking to other people, had been an open book most of the time. But now, he was fine letting Jihyun and the other two talk, was fine playing with his yogurt, not exactly wanting to eat it in the first place.

Jimin was gaining weight. He knew he was. He hadn’t exercised almost at all since Minwo had left. He wasn’t focused, wasn’t as motivated. Honestly didn’t like building muscles and wasn’t drawn to it the way other people were. He exercised for Minwo, and because Minwo wasn’t there... he didn’t want to.

(You need to work out more, Min-ah.

For you, Minwo-ssi. I’ll work out for you.

Min-ah?

Yes?

Maybe you shouldn’t eat tomorrow. You know, just to help get rid of your cheeks.

Oh... Okay.

You need to look good for me.)

And so Jimin watched his frozen yogurt turn to soup, thinking about how chubby he was getting.

Jungkook watched Jimin, watched as Minwo’s lover stirred his spoon absentmindedly through a soupy, sweet substance that had been his frozen yogurt. He had barely eaten anything, staring down at his hands, occasionally licking a few drops of the melted treat from his spoon, though nothing more than that.

Jungkook watched Jimin’s tongue, soft and pink, flick out against the white plastic spoon. Watched the way he swallowed, licking stickiness from his naturally pouty lips, completely lost in thought. Brown eyes and platinum blonde hair and smooth, radiant, honey-tinted skin. He put down his spoon after a minute and looked up, cupping his jaw in his hand as he looked across at Jungkook.



Jungkook's heart slammed into his ribs, his face growing hot as he purposefully looked away from Jimin and over to Jihyun, who was talking to Tae. They were talking about art or something; Jungkook wasn't really sure. Couldn't really pay attention for some reason. But he still couldn't get over how similar Jimin and his brother looked.

"Just a second… I'm getting a call," Tae said, answering his phone and standing from the booth, making his way outside while greeting the person on the other end.

Jimin shifted in his seat, standing up as well. "I'll be right back, too."

Jungkook watched as Jimin's lean form disappeared into the back, towards where an arrow pointed to the bathrooms. Felt a little relieved with Jimin gone. Jihyun was on his phone, and Jungkook pulled out his own. Scrolled through social media for a only a few seconds before the silence was quickly broken.

Mood: Stone by Jaymes Young

"I'm leaving tomorrow," Jihyun said suddenly.

Jungkook looked up from his phone. "Back to Busan?"

Jihyun nodded. He hesitated for a moment, eyes flicking over to where Jimin had disappeared. "I have a favor to ask of you."

Jungkook's curiosity peaked, and he waited for Jimin's brother to continue.

“From what Jiminie’s told me about you in the past, you seem like a good guy, and one of the only friends he has left,” Jihyun started.

Jungkook’s heart was already sinking. He didn’t think he and Jimin were friends, exactly. More like strained acquaintances. But he kept his expression neutral, listening anyways.

“Look after Jimin for me, yeah? I know it’s a lot to ask, but just… I’m not around anymore, you know? I go to university in Busan and I can’t always come here.” Jihyun paused, glancing out the window to his left, watching Taehyung’s pacing form as he talked on the phone. “I’m worried about him,” Jihyun murmured, looking down at the powered off phone in his hands. “Minwo isn’t good for him at all, and since you’re his friend and you live here, maybe just keep an eye on him for me?”

Jungkook didn’t know what to say. Obviously Jimin hadn’t told his brother anything about what had happened weeks ago. Hadn’t told Jihyun how Minwo had beaten the shit out of him and kicked him out in the middle of a snowstorm. But if Jimin hadn’t said anything, then Jungkook didn't think he should either, so he kept his mouth shut.

“Why can’t you just text him?” Jungkook asked.

Jihyun sighed, rubbing at his eyes. He ran a hand through his hair, an action so similar to Jimin that Jungkook had to remind himself that this was Jimin’s brother. “Minwo won’t let him keep in contact with anyone but himself.”

Jungkook shifted awkwardly, not knowing what to do or say. “Not even his own brother?”

Jihyun shook his head, frustrated. “No. It’s bullshit. The fact alone that Minwo’s letting me visit is weird. I haven’t seen Jiminie in months.”

Jungkook scratched the back of his neck, thinking back to how Jimin had called him the night of the snowstorm. How he’d probably hidden that paper for months, too. The paper Jungkook still kept for some reason, as crumpled and ripped as it was. And the paper… Jimin had *called* Jungkook. Had kept it because that was his only connection to anyone besides Minwo. His only escape. And knowing that was like downing a shot of guilt, feeling it ripple queasily through his stomach.

“I know this is a lot to ask, but I just need to know he’s okay. He doesn’t… he doesn’t tell me anything.”

“Why?”

“He’s always been like that... he doesn’t say anything because he feels like he’s a burden or something. I don’t know… I just… I need to know he’s alive and okay, and that’s it.”

There was a desperation in Jihyun’s voice, an exhaustion that touched Jungkook. Maybe because it reminded him of his own hyungs, how they’d kept him put together after he’d been arrested and released for the assistant's beating. Had made sure he hadn’t shattered when he’d fallen, when Minwo had pushed him over the edge time and time again with the court hearings and trials.

“Minwo’s not exactly my favorite person,” Jungkook replied honestly.

“Me neither,” Jihyun agreed. Rubbed at one of his eyes, then rested his chin on his fist, looking too tired for being the same age as Jungkook. “I just don’t understand why Jiminie would go back to that again.”

Jungkook tried to register what those words could mean. “Again?”

Jihyun nodded, glancing nervously again to where Jimin had gone. “I figured you didn’t know much since you asked me if I was still living with my parents.” He scratched the back of his head, black hair shimmering in the cool winter light from the large windows. “But that's just like him not to tell any of his friends anything. He’ll be pissed as hell if he ever finds out I told you.”

Jungkook’s mind was racing, trying to piece together Jihyun’s words, trying to comprehend what Jimin’s brother was telling him. “Why would he be mad?”

Jihyun hesitated. “Again, he’s not the type of person to share his problems with other people. He bottles it up and breaks apart where no one can see. So not even I know exactly what’s going on with Minwo, but I know it’s nothing good. I haven’t seen him this skinny since we lived with our parents.”

Jungkook cleared his throat, twisting his fingers together, playing with the case on his phone. Fidgeting. Nervous. “And what happened with your parents?”

Jihyun loosed a long breath, glancing up at the ceiling, then checked that Jimin wasn’t coming back, that Tae was still on the phone. “I don’t know how much I should say. It was… It wasn’t good. I guess you could say our dad was a drunk and our mom was addicted to pills. Cliche, right? Our home was… broken. And Jimin, he… he protected me as much as he could.” Jihyun nodded to himself. He looked like he was about to cry, holding back tears, voice wavering a little. “Took as many hits as he could for me, you know?”

Jimin was sitting on the couch, slumped forward, head in his hands. And he was covered in bruises. Purple and blue and pink marred his smooth skin, old ones and new ones that looked like they’d just blossomed. The back of his neck was probably the worst...

Jungkook wondered how many times Jihyun had seen Jimin like that. How many times Jimin had put himself between a fist and his younger brother. How many times their drunken father had stumbled in after a long night of drinking, angry and out of his mind, and raised a fist towards Jihyun. How many times Jimin might've pushed his way between them, taking hit after hit so that his little brother didn't have to.

“Shit, I don’t mean to cry. It’s just… he’s *always* taken care of me, and I’ve *always* been on the receiving end. I want to take care of *him* for once, even if I’m not here,” Jihyun explained, blinking the moisture from his eyes.

Jungkook held Jihyun’s gaze, looked right into those brown eyes. Saw the pain and confusion and helplessness. The worry. Worry that could keep any person up at night: an all-consuming fear.

Both of them jumped when Jimin slid into the booth next to Jihyun, smile on his face. He slung an arm over his younger brother’s shoulders, hand reaching up to play with the singular piercing in his ear. And the way he sat next to him, the light shining in his eyes as he looked at Jihyun…

Jungkook could see it. Could see how Jimin would do something like that. Put himself in harm’s way for his brother. Because the way Jimin was looking at Jihyun, it was the way Jungkook’s own hyungs looked at the maknae. And his hyungs had done damn near everything to keep him safe, protected, put together.

“What’s wrong, Hyunie?”

“I was just thinking I didn’t want to leave tomorrow,” Jihyun said, the helplessness and hurt gone

from his gaze, masked with calm.

Jimin's smile dimmed a little as he ruffled Jihyun's thick black hair. "It's not tomorrow yet, rascal." Jimin pulled Jihyun's neck over, bumping their heads together, smile swallowing his eyes. "What were you two talking about? It looked serious."

Jungkook shrugged. "He was just telling me-" panic flitted through Jihyun's gaze, "-about what's tasty in Busan."

Jimin buckled forward against the table, laughing. He covered his mouth with his hands as he laughed, bright and tinkling and happy. Beautiful. His laugh was beautiful; it always had been. Jungkook bit his lip, looking away, back to Jihyun. Saw that pain in the younger brother's eyes as their gazes met. Saw the pleading.

Jungkook nodded once.

They all looked up as Tae came back in, sitting next to Jungkook. "It was Yoongi-hyung. He was convinced I took his headphones. Can you believe it? It turned out to be Jin-hyung, but he kept me on the phone until he found them."

Jungkook smiled, pushing away the weird feeling in his chest. Pushed away Jihyun's words, Jimin's smiling eyes and sparkling laugh. Pushed it all, patting Tae's shoulder. "We should get going soon. I have dance practice, and unless you want to walk home we should leave now."

Tae nodded before grabbing his and Jungkook's trash, standing back up and heading over to the trash cans by the front door. The rest of them started standing up as well, doing up their coats and pulling on hats and scarves.

Jungkook slipped his facemask up and over his nose, straightening his red beanie. Looked to where Jimin was preoccupied with taking the rest of the trash to the garbage where Tae had gotten distracted on his phone, slowly meandering back to the table.

"What's your number?" Jungkook found himself asking Jihyun.

They exchanged numbers quickly, as if they might get caught, not wanting Jimin to notice. It felt strange to be promising something like this when Jungkook knew he would only hurt Jimin in the end. Knew in order to get his life back, he would need to show Jimin's abuse to the world.

Because he'd done everything he could in court; he'd told the truth, and for a year nobody had believed him. For a year Minwo had slaughtered his character and slowly started convincing the jury he was guilty. Hayoon's plan- Jungkook's plan- was his last chance at freedom. Because his time was running out, the bars of a prison cell tattooed in the back of his head; his week in jail when the assistant had first been assaulted hadn't helped his nightmares. He was haunted, haunted by blood that wasn't supposed to be on his hands. And Jimin, Jimin was his only shot.

But he couldn't think about that right now. Right now, Jihyun was standing in front of him with a raw agony in his eyes that made Jungkook feel strange. And maybe this promise would tear Jungkook in up as he fulfilled his plan, but he'd already been torn into too many pieces already to care. His conscience was black with soot, and this promise wouldn't taint him any further. So he gave Jihyun one last reassuring look before Jimin came back, started guiding him away.

And Jungkook knew he was fucking himself over, but it was too late.

He was too far gone.

Chapter End Notes

I hope this chapter answers a few more questions, or at least helps a bit with some backstory. Don't hate Jungkook too much haha it isn't just him that's fucked things up. Trust me, Jimin's done his fair share of ruining things as well. Anyways, thanks for all the support! It truly is awesome :)

golden rain

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: when the party's over by Billie Eilish

From the moment Jimin woke up the next morning, he had a lump in his throat, trying to remind himself to stay strong until Hyunie left. They'd stayed up late talking the night before. Talking about their childhood, about the rare good times, even some of the bad.

And for the first time in almost a year, Jimin didn't feel completely alone. Sure, he'd talked to Jihyun the whole time he'd been here… but things were always more cherished before they left. Jimin should know.

And now, standing at the end of the driveway, watching Jihyun shove his bags into the back seat of a taxi, Jimin's heart started beating with pain, spreading icy and sharp through his veins. He wrapped Jihyun up in a bone-splintering hug, thinking that maybe if he held on just a bit longer it'd hurt less.

"You take care of yourself, Hyunie," Jimin whispered into Jihyun's shoulder. "Make sure to eat good and get enough sleep."

"You too, Jiminie," Jihyun huffed out, holding Jimin just as tightly. "You take care of yourself, too."

And it felt like when they were kids. When they had been ripped away from each other and Jimin had watched the child protective services shut Jihyun in the back of a black car. Watched as his brother had pressed a tear streaked face and runny nose against the window, chubby hands still reaching for him.

"Love you," Jimin whispered, finally letting go. But there was so much panic and hurt in Jihyun's eyes, so much that it hit Jimin right in the heart.

"Leave him."

Jimin started shaking his head. "I can't-"

"Come back to Busan."

"I can't just leave him," Jimin tried to explain, feeling too torn, too threadbare.

Jihyun had tears welling up in his eyes, gripping Jimin's boney shoulders like they were his lifeline. " *Please.* You can live with me. We can share my room. My roommates wouldn't mind-"

Jimin shook his head, suddenly exhausted. "I can't just abandon him. Things will get better."

Jihyun brushed tears from his cheeks, sniffing, blinking rapidly as he looked up at the clear, sunny winter sky. His shockingly black hair was ruffled by a bitter breeze, and when he finally looked back down at Jimin, the older brother nearly left with him right then. Nearly got in that taxi, just to take away the pain.

“Don’t let him hurt you,” Jihyun whispered brokenly, wrapping Jimin up in a final embrace. “I love you too much.”

And all too soon the taxi was pulling away, and Jimin was watching. Watched until it disappeared from sight, turning down a different road. Continued watching where it had vanished, thinking it would turn around and come back.

But it didn’t.

And he was alone once more.

Jungkook raised the cup of tea to his lips, sipping at it. Swirled the hot, bitter liquid over his tongue, the steam from the cup brushing against his lips, soothing and peaceful.

Namjoon sat across from him in the little cafe, sipping at a coffee. Usually they’d go for drinks, but since it was an especially cold winter day, they had settled for the cafe instead of the bar. And sitting there with Namjoon, he felt a little less on edge than he had been all morning.

“What’ve you been up to lately?” Namjoon asked.

Jungkook played with his phone, spinning it around in circles on the table. “Nothing much. I’ve been dancing with Hoseok-hyung… but that’s about it. Not much I can do with the case and everything.”

Namjoon nodded, no trace of dimples to be found, only sadness. “Everyone at work knows you didn’t do it. They’re not sure who did, but they know it wasn’t you.”

“They still don’t suspect Minwo?”

Namjoon shook his head. “Minwo’s a good guy. You can’t be mad at him just because he’s running the company while they get everything figured out.”

“He testified against me,” Jungkook pointed out.

“He didn’t testify *against* you. He just-”

“He convinced everyone in South Korea to believe I’m a monster.”

Namjoon flinched a little at that, shifting awkwardly in his seat. “You’re not a monster, Jungkook-ah.”

At one point Jungkook would’ve argued that. He *had* argued that. For a year. “It was him, hyung. I know it was.”

Namjoon sighed. They’d had this conversation many times. “How do you know it was Minwo? He wasn’t even in the city that night.”

Jungkook tilted his head to the side in annoyance. “I just do.”

I know because I’ve seen Jimin’s bruised body.

Namjoon traced the rim of his cup, looking too tired these days. “That’s not going to hold up in court.”

“I know,” Jungkook murmured.

It was quiet for a moment, both of them sipping at their drinks, soaking in the bitterness of winter bleeding into the room. Namjoon leaned forward, resting his cheek on a fist as he looked out the window of the little cafe, the cool light smoothing over the soft plains of his face. “This winter will be over soon,” he assured softly, almost talking to himself.

Jungkook stopped fidgeting, knowing his hyung wasn’t just talking about how it was March, how it would be turning to spring soon. He’d heard Namjoon phrase things weirdly before, almost speaking in poems sometimes. But that’s one of the things Jungkook had missed the most.

“Passing by the edge of a cold winter?” Jungkook asked.

“Until the days of spring,” Namjoon finished with a smile, those dimples dipping in his cheeks. “You know my lines too well.”

Jungkook’s own smile slowly melted from his face, and he found himself staring down at his cup of tea. “Hyung… what if I had evidence against Minwo?”

Namjoon seemed to straighten a little bit. “Like what?”

“Like a video of him… being violent or something…”

“We both know the security cameras were tampered with that night. We have no footage of anything that happened in your office.”

Jungkook nodded quickly. “I know… not from that night. But from something else. Would it be enough?”

Namjoon leaned back in his chair, thinking it over. “If there was anything out there, which I doubt there is and you shouldn’t get your hopes up… but if there *was* anything... it might. Right now you’re the prime suspect, but you have a clean record and several testimonies including my own about having a good character. And if you had proof Minwo was capable of something like that… I don’t know… I don’t know, Jungkook-ah. I mean, he *was* gone that night… the police have a solid testimony about that.”

“But if there was a video of him doing something like he did to the assistant?”

A pause. “Well, if it was as bad as the assistant he’d definitely get in trouble. He’d lose his position at GCF and they might investigate further into his alibis and such… but he has a pretty solid story, and nobody’s ever seen him even hint at aggression or violence. There isn’t any proof out there that he is like that.”

Pink hair and blue jacket and faded shorts. Snow caked converses, shivering madly, freezing, wet with ice. Cold, so cold. Bruises, bruises marring and mapping his skin like stars dotted into the sky.

Minwo gets stressed sometimes. He forgets his own strength. But it’s nothing, really. Just stress.

“I know, hyung. I know.”

“Jungkook-ah…” Namjoon murmured, something anguished in his eyes as he studied the maknae. “It’s a nice thought, but don’t get too caught up in it. There’s nothing you can do.”

Jungkook nodded absently, tracing his fingertip around the edge of the steaming, styrofoam cup. “I don’t want to go back. I don’t want to go back there.”

Namjoon's big hand was suddenly wrapped around Jungkook's wrist, and the maknae looked up at him. And his hyung looked so exhausted, so desperate for Jungkook to survive this. "You won't go back. I promise. I won't let them arrest you again."

Because jails weren't made of iron bars, they were made of white-washed walls and suffocating metal rooms. Made of slanted windows and monsters that hid in the corners, waiting, watching. Always fucking watching. Black eyes and grotesque souls and numbing cold. It was always so cold there.

Jungkook had gone to therapy a few weeks after he'd gotten out of jail. Both to deal with the sudden shattering of his image and the ruthless onslaught of hate that had smashed into his self-esteem. To help sort through his experiences from jail, things that'd taken hours of prying to speak about.

The death threats, too. That's why he'd ended up moving back in with his hyungs, leaving the penthouse he'd been living in for a year on his own. Because spray paint had slashed up Jungkook's head, the word "monster" following him like a shadow ingrained into the air he breathed.

He'd never told his therapist about Jimin, though. And sometimes he regretted that. Sometimes he wished he'd healed already, hadn't taken the hit Jimin had dealt him as hard as he had. But he hadn't, hadn't told her. Watercoloring and moping about feelings for a paid hour could only do so much in terms of healing.

And looking around the warm, cozy coffee shop, he couldn't help but think about Jimin. He tended to avoid cafes for that very reason.

"What if she never wakes up?" Jungkook asked, heart beating low and hard in his chest.

Namjoon's eyes flitted over the maknae's tired face. "I don't know, Jungkook-ah… I don't know."

Jungkook hadn't been there, hadn't seen it happen, knew Minwo had technically been in another city… but if Jimin was anything to go by, Jungkook would have already arrested Minwo himself. Which was what he was now counting on.

Mood: Die Trying by Michl

"Jimin?" Jungkook breathed, standing paralyzed on the other side of the counter.

A shot of adrenaline rushed through Jimin's core, his heart pumping that much faster. He couldn't help the timid smile that stole to his lips as he took in GCF's young CEO standing before him, staring with those wide, innocent bambi eyes he hadn't been able to stop thinking about.

"Good morning, Jungkook-ssi."

Jungkook stuttered for words, the apples of his cheeks going a little pink as he clutched his phone a little too hard in his hand. "I didn't know you worked here… I thought you lived in Incheon."

Jimin nodded, a smile still staining his cheeks. "I do. I commute here every morning."

Jungkook eyes were trained on Jimin, still staring, and Jimin couldn't help but feel a little shy under Jungkook's gaze. "That's like an hour commute."

Jimin laughed a little, shrugging. “I have two jobs here and I go to university.”

Jungkook seemed to soak up any information Jimin offered him. “Why not just move here, then?”

Jimin fiddled with the cash register, a little too happy to be talking to Jungkook again. In the back of his head, he heard his boyfriend’s words making him promise to stay away. But Jungkook was… he was too bright, too endearing for Jimin to really bring himself to cut off. “My best friend and I rent an apartment in Incheon. He works and goes to classes there, so I commute here to do my own stuff. It’s not too bad.”

Jungkook nodded, still staring at Jimin. And Jimin, his heart was racing, almost wondering if there was something on his face, if Hoseok had sharpied “sexy-mochi” on his forehead again. The last time that’d happened, he’d gone all day wondering why people were staring at him until his friend Taemin had pointed it out.

“Are you going to order?”

Jungkook blinked, coming out of his trance, his gaze falling down to the counter between them. “Oh, yeah,” he murmured, rubbing the back of his neck shyly.

Jimin took Jungkook’s order, started making it as the young CEO stood there and watched. It wasn’t busy at all-- it was 9 am, the morning rush for coffee over by now as everyone had already gotten to work. So Jimin took his time, not wanting Jungkook to leave just yet.

“I thought you didn’t like coffee,” Jungkook spoke up as Jimin was tamping the ground espresso.

Jimin tilted his head to the side as he thought, trying to figure out where to go with his little fib from the GCF lobby. “I, uh… I’m around coffee so much I’ve gotten sick of it.”

“So you really only drink water?”

Jimin huffed out a laugh, shaking his head as the coffee pattered down into the white cup, steam wafting up into his face. “Do you only drink coffee?”

Jungkook’s nose wrinkled cutely. “No.” He paused, watching as Jimin stirred in a few ingredients. And Jimin could feel Jungkook studying him, could feel his gaze like a warm shiver down his spine. “I like your hair.”

Jimin was grinning now. Couldn’t help himself. “Yeah?” He'd dyed his hair a light, golden blond just earlier that week. He'd loved the red, but he'd wanted to try blond for once.

“I mean, I liked the red hair, but you look really good blond.”

Jimin’s heart fluttered a bit at that. Loved praise, every drop of it. Knew he shouldn’t let himself feel so affected by simple compliments, but enjoyed them too much anyways. He bit his lip, punching in the numbers at the cash register, totaling Jungkook’s purchase. He couldn’t help himself from studying the young CEO as he opened his wallet, looking for his cash.

Handsome, so handsome. Sharp jaw and big eyes and a beauty mark almost touching his lower lip, one on his nose. Dark brown hair hanging low over his glittering gaze. And like last time in the lobby, he was wearing a dress shirt that hugged his shoulders and arms just right, the cut of muscles beneath shifting as he handed over some money.

The register drawer popped open and Jimin handed Jungkook his change, fingers brushing as they did so. And Jungkook just stared at him, Jimin’s head swirling as he handed over the cup of coffee.

“Thank you,” Jungkook muttered, eyes slipping down to stare at their hands.

And Jimin could see it. He could see how good Jungkook was, his heart like pure, unrefined gold. Because unlike so many people Jimin had met and known, there was something completely raw, something entirely honest in the youth of Jungkook’s presence. It struck him that Jungkook’s feeling was that of pearls and silk, soft and iridescent and kind. And even though they’d only talked a handful of times, he was drawn to Jungkook in a way that terrified him.

The bell chimed as another customer opened the front door, Jungkook hastily taking a step back, blushing furiously. “Have a good day.”

Jimin smiled. “You, too.” He watched Jungkook, watched the young CEO as he left, his cup of coffee cradled in his hands, a shy smile on his face. And work went on, more customers coming and going. And throughout the day, Jungkook's dark brown eyes were in the back of his head.

Stay away from Jungkook.

Promise me.

Later that night, Jimin was wrapped up in Minwo's arms on the couch in the living room, cuddling closer to his boyfriend's warmth. Minwo had surprised him with a night out to dinner, thoroughly spoiling him, and when they'd gotten home Minwo had let him pick the movie they were watching. It was Titanic, and Jimin's eyes were glued to the flickering screen. Watched as the Titanic struck an iceberg and started sinking. Jack was chained to a pipe in the belly of the ship, water quickly swallowing the ship whole.

And Jimin wondered how the captain hadn't seen the iceberg. How blind he must've been to have missed something that huge, that dangerous. He thought if he was on that ship there was no way he would've missed it.

Jimin's thoughts were dashed to pieces as he felt lips press right below his ear. He tilted his head to the side, Minwo kissing a line down the smooth slant of his neck. Felt his boyfriend's warm hands slipping around to cup his waist, pulling him closer. And as the ship was sinking, the screams of the passengers mingling with the desperation of people trying to escape, Jimin's mind went fuzzy with static as his boyfriend pulled him into his lap.

Jimin wrapped his arms around Minwo's neck, meeting his kisses with equal fervor, groaning as Minwo threaded his hands through Jimin's hair.

"Fuck, Min-ah..." Minwo whispered, everything dark and hazy as the ship continued to sink. "You're so fucking hot."

Jimin moaned, grinding down into Minwo's lap.

"Little fucking slut for me," Minwo groaned into the kiss.

Jimin winced a little inside, but played along anyways. "Only for you."

And as they kissed, Jimin's mind wandered. Didn't really even notice he was thinking about Jungkook until he opened his eyes and met a pair the wrong shade of brown. Dark, black-brown looked back at him, full of coal and cinders and ash. Gold, Jimin was looking for gold. Looking for golden rain and an opalescent soul and a sunshine heart. But just as soon as Jungkook had entered his mind, the young man was dashed away. Dashed away as Minwo flipped Jimin over, pinning him into the cushions, uttering his pet name like a prayer.

Jimin downed everything like a shot of whiskey, drunk on the feeling of being touched, being loved. Forced Jungkook from his mind, terrified of himself. Forced everything away.

In the background, the Titanic sank, and Jack's body slipped into the frigid waters below.

Chapter End Notes

hope you liked this chapter :) it's super fun reading everyone's thoughts and predictions. again, thank you so much for the support!

tying a noose

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jimin tried not to think too much about it as he walked up the steps to Jungkook's home. Tried not to think about how the last time he'd been here, he'd trudged through miles of snow and ice, freezing and numb. How he'd spent the day curled up in Jin's lap, puking.

That's why he'd baked them cookies. To say thank you for that god awful night. He would thank them and leave. So he knocked quickly before he could change his mind.

When the door opened, it was Jin standing before him, wearing a work uniform covered in flour, sleeves rolled up, black bangs messy. "Aigoo! Jiminie!" Jin exclaimed, stepping out onto the porch.

Jimin breathed a sigh of relief, scared for a second that Jin wouldn't even remember him. "Jin-hyung, how are you?"

Jin slung an arm around Jimin's neck, already talking his ear off, guiding him into the house and shutting the door behind them. He smelled of fresh bread, of savory spices. The logo on the uniform was from a restaurant Jimin recognized, hadn't known Jin worked there.

"Do you want me to go find Jungkook-ah?"

~~*Yes. Don't let me go back yet. Ask me to stay.*~~

Jimin shook his head, holding out the plate of cookies in his hand. "I just came by to drop these off."

Jin took the plate, immediately taking a cookie out and biting into it. He chewed for a moment before his eyes widened and he smiled. "Wah! These are good."

Jimin laughed at the strange noises Jin made while eating, watched as he set the plate on the counter.

"You should stay for a bit. I'm trying to get everyone to watch a movie with me, but they won't stop playing their video games or whatever."

Jimin smiled quietly, thinking about what it would look like to see Jungkook staring intently at a computer screen, playing games. "Are you sure?"

Jin grabbed another cookie before heading upstairs. "Come on. Maybe they'll listen to me if you're there."

Jimin shrugged. "I don't think I'd make a difference, but okay."

Jimin followed Jin up the stairs, the long hallway clear in his memory. He remembered hugging a blanket around himself after just having woken up, following Jin's instructions to find Jungkook in his room and ask if he wanted anything to eat.

Jin didn't knock on Jungkook's door. He just opened it, walking in. "Jungkook-ah!"

Jimin stood at the door frame, not stepping in. Peered over Jin's broad shoulders and saw a flash of bare skin. And then, Jin was turning to the side, motioning back to Jimin.

“Look, Jimin’s here. Stop being a brat and come watch a movie with us.”

Heat shot to Jimin’s face and he took a step back, embarrassed as his eyes flitted quickly over the maknae’s form. He could see the surprise on Jungkook’s face, slowly shifting to irritation as he looked to Jin.

Because Jungkook was shirtless. And it didn’t take long to realize Jungkook had the body of a god. Broad shoulders and prominent collar bones. Smooth, caramel-cream skin and little beauty marks sparsely dotted across abs and strong arms. Looked like he had just gotten done working out, sweat glossing his soft skin, prominent veins running along his forearms. He was wearing a pair of black sweatpants that hung too low on his hips, the rim of his grey underwear peeking just above a V line, and Jimin’s gaze followed it, a weird feeling fluttering through his stomach.

“You could’ve warned me,” Jungkook grumbled, flustered, grabbing a shirt from the floor and pulling it on over his head. It was a grey, oversized shirt with baggy sleeves touching his forearms, falling down past those fucking ridiculous hips and narrow waist, hiding his perfect body.



Jin glanced from Jungkook to Jimin, a slow grin growing on his face. “Is little Jungkookie embarrassed?” He took a step towards the maknae, reaching out to ruffle his hair. Jungkook dodged it, slapping his hand away. “Aigoo, if you like Jiminie you shouldn’t be shy!”

Jimin’s face was on fire at this point, mouth dropped open a little in shock, not sure what to do. Remembered how Jungkook had confessed to having a crush on him in the past. Didn’t want to go

there. So he backed out into the hall, saying he'd be downstairs as Jungkook started denying Jin's claim adamantly, almost with disgust.

"I thought I heard something about you being here," a low voice commented, one of the other doors in the hallway opening.

Jimin hadn't seen Yoongi since that night they'd walked back to Minwo's. Jimin smiled nervously, still flustered, glancing back to where Jungkook and Jin were still going at it, bickering like two little children.

"I just came here to give you guys cookies."

Yoongi suddenly looked a little less tired. "Cookies?"

Jimin nodded. "They're downstairs. Jin-hyung's already eaten two of them."

Yoongi pouted, his lips puckered out. "Pig."

Jimin couldn't help the tiny laugh that bubbled from his chest at that. It wasn't common to find a hyung that let his dongsaengs tease and insult him so much, and Jimin would never cease to be amused by it. The way Jin was basically a silly father half of the time and a spoiled toddler the rest.

"Come on, let's just go downstairs. Did Jin-hyung say something about a movie?" Yoongi asked.

Jimin nodded, thinking back to Jin's words earlier, how he'd complained that nobody had wanted to watch one with him. That Jimin might change their minds. "Yeah, but shouldn't we wait for them?"

Yoongi was already walking down the steps, not looking back at Jimin as he said, "We'd be waiting for a while. Trust me, those two could squabble all night."

Jimin looked back at Jin and Jungkook, unsure. Their tones had dropped lower, standing closer, hushed argument being thrown back and forth. Obviously whatever had happened, Jungkook wasn't too happy about it. It was probably the fact that *Minwo's lover* had walked in on him shirtless.

A bitterness rose through Jimin's chest. He was tired of being labelled as someone else's. It was never just "Jimin." Always *Minwo's lover* or *that foster kid* or… or Hoseok's best friend. Though he hadn't ever minded that last one. Either way, though, he realized he'd never belonged to himself. Had always been owned by or indebted to someone for something.

He made his way downstairs, seeing that Yoongi was already eating a cookie, headphones on, phone in hand. He looked up at Jimin, face blank as he ate. "It's good."

Jimin laughed lightly. "You don't sound very convincing."

Yoongi shrugged. "I don't have to." There was a pause in the arguing upstairs for a second before it started up again. Jimin glanced at the staircase, brows raised. "Jin is what I call 'Chaotic Good,'" Yoongi observed, bringing Jimin's attention back to the mint haired young man.

"Chaotic Good? What does that mean?"

"That's what happens when you get a good heart like his and combine it with stupidity and randomness."

Jimin couldn't help himself; burst out laughing, eyes squinting closed into his eye smile. Chaotic Good was definitely an accurate description of Jin. "Then what are you?" Jimin asked.

"I'm Chaotic Neutral."

Jimin waited for him to explain.

"It means I don't give a shit."

Jimin laughed at that, too.

"What am I then?"

"You're Lawful Good," Yoongi said without hesitation.

"Lawful Good?"

"It means you're too pure for this ugly world."

Minwo's lover. Secret little fuck-buddy. Coward; unable to leave. Little fucking slut.

Jimin grimaced. "I don't know if… I don't know if Lawful Good exactly suits me."

Yoongi shrugged. "When you were sick you were talking about how you once found 50 cents on the street and went to the police station to turn it in. I think that explains enough."

Jimin flushed a little, embarrassed. "I didn't know I told you guys about that."

Yoongi just smiled a gummy smile, apparently in a very good mood from what Jimin had previously seen. "You said a lot of shit while you were out of it. I think you argued with Jin and Tae for almost an hour about if the video game he was playing was actually going to brainwash him."

"I guess I don't remember much from that day."

Yoongi nodded slowly, the gummy smile slipping away. The argument from upstairs could still be heard, but it had toned down a lot. And with that, the quiet between Jimin and Yoongi echoed, causing Jimin's heart to race.

"How've you been?" Yoongi asked, the question layered.

Jimin ran a hand through his hair, shifting awkwardly from one foot to the other. "I, um... I've been doing okay." But he knew Yoongi wanted to hear more than that. Was actually concerned for some reason, even though they'd only seen each other once before. "Minwo's been out of town."

Yoongi nodded. "I saw in the news."

Jimin nodded, too. Cleared his throat as he looked around the living room and kitchen, gaze flitting over the couch he'd spent an entire day on, curled up in Jin's lap. Jungkook's hyungs… they were too kind. And Jimin had been craving kindness. Maybe that was another reason he had come tonight.

"Can I… can I ask you something?" Jimin mumbled quietly, eyes downcast.

Yoongi didn't say anything, the silence urging Jimin to continue.

“You said… that night, you said you’d had a girlfriend…” Jimin ran a hand through his hair again. “And she was like Minwo…”

Yoongi nodded, expression closed.

“Why did… I mean-- How did you…” Words were poison in Jimin’s throat. Trying to talk about it was like pulling up every single root of a massive tree from the muddled ground. “How did you…”

“How did I leave?”

Jimin closed his eyes as he nodded.

Yoongi sighed, pulling his headphones down so they rested around his neck, his attention fully on Jimin. He crossed his arms over his stomach, leaning against the counter as he thought. “It was hard. It was really fucking hard.”

Jimin finally looked the other young man in the eyes. Saw the darkness, the haunted memories lurking beneath pale skin. Felt guilty for making Yoongi recall such dark things.

“I thought about it for a long time. Leaving her, I mean. But every time I would get close, she’d pull me back in, make me feel like I was being foolish. It was a cycle that went on for months before I finally left. But I gained the courage to do it because I realized something.”

“What?” Jimin whispered.

Yoongi’s piercing gaze settled on Jimin like fire. “I realized that wishing for things to go back to the way they had been was ignoring the fact that she’d always been a monster and always would be. And when I started looking in the mirror and not even being able to recognize my own reflection, I knew she’d ripped me up and shredded every bit of happiness I had. And I knew that getting out and getting away would be my only way of surviving. Because at that point, I couldn’t tell the difference between living and dying. I was only concerned with survival and nothing else.”

Jimin blinked at Yoongi, the words crashing through him. He felt the dread sizzling up his spine as he realized he felt the same way. Realized he couldn’t tell if he himself was dead or alive most of the time. He knew Minwo was a monster, had known for a long time, but he’d always hoped it would pass. That things would change and he’d have the man he’d foolishly fallen in love with back.

But his hope was tying a noose around his neck.

Minwo was an executioner.

And Jimin was about to hang.

“You could’ve knocked!” Jungkook persisted, folding his arms over his chest.

Jin shrugged, grinning. “And miss out on the opportunity for little Jiminie seeing you shirtless?”

Jungkook groaned, found himself absentmindedly running a hand through his hair. He’d seen Jimin shirtless twice now… it shouldn’t be that big of a deal. But the shyness in him was prickling, thinking about how Jimin had looked him up and down, face flushing. “How many times do I have to tell you? There is *absolutely nothing* going on.”

Jin puckered up his lips, making kissing noises. *"Oh, Jimin! I'm the Golden Maknae, here to sweep you off your feet! Oh, Jiminie!"*

Jungkook punched Jin's shoulder. "Stop that! You act younger than I do."

Jin rubbed at the spot Jungkook had punched, pouting. "Yah, you don't have to hit me so hard!"

"Then stop teasing me about Jimin!"

Jin went to pucker up his lips again but stopped, flinching back as Jungkook raised his fist in warning. They stared at each other intensely for a moment. Jin's eyes narrowed, sly smile tugging at his mouth. "Jimin's cute, though."

"He's just a friend."

"I can tell when you like someone. Hyung knows his dongsaengs."

Jungkook rolled his eyes, scoffing. Poked his tongue into his cheek. "It's not like that. He has someone else."

Jin didn't even blink. "So?"

Jungkook gave his hyung an exasperated look. *"Hyung~"* He knew if Jin found out who Jimin actually was, they wouldn't be having this conversation right now. Speaking of which…

"Where'd he go?" Jungkook asked, peering around Jin's stupidly broad shoulders.

Jin whipped around, cursing. "Tell me Yoongi didn't fucking…"

Jungkook pushed past Jin, quickly descending the stairs, Jin's footsteps echoing behind him. When he got to the big main room with the kitchen and living room, the TV was on but nothing was playing. Jimin and Yoongi were sitting together on the couch, Jimin leaning over, looking down at Yoongi's phone, reading or watching something.

Jungkook walked up behind them, leaning down, head between theirs to see what they were staring at. It was an article about… about the assistant in the coma… how doctors thought she was making progress, showing signs she wasn't actually brain dead as they'd thought at first.

A spike of anger stabbed through Jungkook's gut, remembering the night he'd found her beaten and bloodied in his office. Remembered running up to her, checking for a pulse, not even thinking his DNA had been planted all over her barely breathing body. Not even thinking twice before calling the police.

"What are you reading?" Jungkook asked.

Yoongi cursed, looking up at the maknae, clearly annoyed. "Do you have to nose into everything?"

Jimin was looking up at him too, studying him, thinking something over. Comparing. Debating. Deciding. Jungkook didn't like it, didn't like being analyzed like that, especially because that's the only look anyone had given him the entire past year.

The look that asked, *"Was Jeon Jungkook really capable of doing that to someone?"* The same look the police had given him when they'd showed up on his doorstep to arrest him. The look the judge had given him when they'd released him with orders not to leave town, to stick around until they found enough evidence to convict him.

“I thought we were watching a movie,” Jungkook murmured darkly, memories flashing behind his eyes. Couldn’t stop seeing her battered body, couldn’t stop comparing it to Jimin’s.

“Jimin-ah wanted to wait for you two idiots.”

Jungkook forced a smile on his face, pushing away the dark, slimy feeling that came whenever he was reminded of the night he’d found his assistant’s battered body. Forced a smile as he’d always done for his hyungs and walked around the couch, sitting right between Yoongi and Jimin.

Yoongi rolled his eyes, curling his legs up to his chest and leaning away from Jungkook, zoning out on his phone. Jin was doing something in the kitchen behind them, and Jimin was looking down at his lap, playing with loose threads on his ripped jeans.

“So, why were you guys reading about the assistant?” Jungkook asked, mostly speaking to Jimin.

Jimin shrugged, too focused on his jeans to look at the maknae. “I was curious.”

A pang of irritation coiled through Jungkook’s gut at those words. “Curious about if I would beat someone enough to put them in a coma?”

It was the wrong thing to say, Jin’s movements in the kitchen pausing, Yoongi sucking in a tired breath. Jungkook tried to play it off, casually leaning forward and plucking the TV remote from the coffee table. But the tension in the room was too thick, too sticky to ignore.

“Sorry,” Jimin muttered, not denying it.

Jungkook’s shoulders tensed as he felt what he knew were Jin’s hands massaging the back of his neck. “He was just wondering, Jungkook-ah. He’s your friend. He was probably just curious about the new updates that came out.”

Jungkook nodded silently, heart beating too hard in his throat to speak. He shook his bangs out of his eyes, swatting at Jin’s hands before his hyung went back to whatever he was doing in the kitchen. Yoongi elbowed Jungkook in the ribs, though, the only warning the maknae would get.

“Are we going to watch a movie or not?” Jimin asked, trying to change the subject.

Jungkook’s only acknowledgement was switching the channel, the DVD logo popping up, slowly travelling across the screen before bouncing off the edge, over and over again. “What do we want to watch?”

“We should watch Titanic,” Jin suggested from behind them.

Jungkook rolled his eyes. “We’ve watched Titanic a million times, hyung.”

Yoongi didn’t say anything, more focused on his phone.

Jimin just shrugged. “Titanic sounds good to me.”

Jungkook’s gaze snapped to Jimin, saw the sly smile playing on his soft lips. Jimin was no longer focused on his ripped jeans, instead looking back at Jin, amusement sparkling in his eyes.

“Wah, what a good friend this is. Nobody in this house ever takes my side on anything,” Jin said, grin leaking into his voice.

Jimin was smiling, too. Beamed at the praise, the term ‘friend.’ He was sitting with one leg crossed over the other, elbow resting on his knee, palm cupping his chin. His platinum blond hair was

grown out the tiniest bit, his roots the color of black coffee. His warm skin shone with health, smooth and unblemished, his features delicately happy. As if Minwo's absence the entire last month had let Jimin sleep better, let him heal a little bit. Jungkook wasn't complaining… he decided he liked it when Jimin didn't look so sad all the time.

"I love Titanic. It's my favorite movie," Jimin admitted.

Jungkook's eyebrows rose beneath his bangs at that. "Titanic? Why?"

"There's something tragic about it." Jimin shrugged, dark eyes glittering as he looked at Jungkook. "Plus, my favorite scene ever is where he's holding her and she puts out her arms as if she's flying."

Jin made a *'wah'* sound from behind them, snapping Jungkook out of how he'd been staring into Jimin's eyes. They both looked back at Jin, who looked too happy for any sane person. "That's my favorite part, too!"

Jungkook heard Yoongi sigh. "Isn't that everyone's favorite part?"

"It seems to be the only part of the movie that actually matters," Jungkook breathed out sarcastically.

"You're just jealous cause you don't have anyone to do that with," Jin chided.

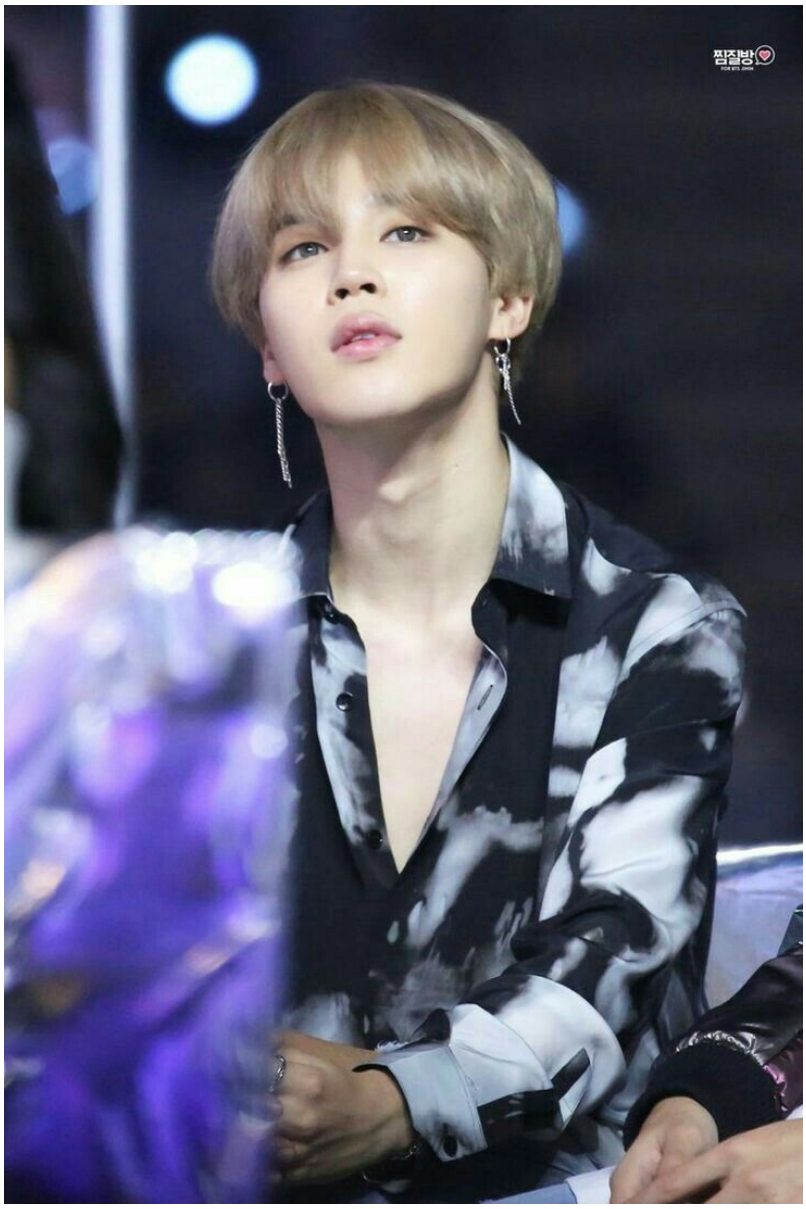
"You don't, either," Jungkook retorted.

Jin's mouth puckered into a pout. "Jiminie will do it with me."

Jimin laughed, nodding. So Jungkook begrudgingly got up and put the Titanic DVD they had into the DVD player, pressing play, turning the lights off. Sat back down in between Jimin and Yoongi, a little squished between them.

The movie started up and Jungkook wasn't really paying attention; he'd seen it about a thousand times. But what he *was* paying attention to was the way Jimin seemed completely entranced by the flickering images on the screen. How he had subconsciously leaned a little bit forward, eyes wide with something sad as Jack first met Rose, saving her from throwing herself over the side of the ship.

Jungkook's eyes flicked down to Jimin's soft lips, liking the way the white light from the TV smoothed over them. How they were parted just a little, and how he would lick his bottom lip every now and then. And Jungkook thought back to Tony's Frozen Yogurt Shop, how Jimin had licked at that spoon and the maknae had been unable to look away. Had watched it and wanted to feel what it would be like to lean forward and lick the sticky sweetness from Jimin's lips himself.



Minwo's lover.

Jungkook felt those words pound through him, hitting him a bit harder than they should have. It was the first time that night he'd actually thought about it, that the young man sitting next to him was secretly fucking Minwo. Minwo, who had betrayed him the first chance he'd gotten, testifying to the police that he thought Jungkook *was* capable of a horrendously violent crime.

And yet, the Jimin he'd always pictured during the many months he'd known him as Minwo's lover was drastically different from the Jimin sitting next to him. The Jimin sitting next to him had brought them cookies, thought Jungkook was weird for putting milk in before his cereal, always ran his hand through his hair.

This Jimin loved Titanic and frozen yogurt and being called a friend. Didn't have a driver's license so he walked everywhere, but didn't seem to mind it. He wasn't rude or stuck up or monstrous as Jungkook had imagined him to be after everything that'd happened...

And this Jimin liked cuddling, which Jungkook realized very quickly because Jimin was leaning back against the couch now, head tilting a little until it rested on Jungkook's shoulder.

The maknae froze, eyes a little wide, heart going crazy because it was like when a dog fell asleep on you and you didn't want to move because they were too cute and had trusted you and picked you to sleep on out of everyone else and you would feel guilty if you even moved an inch because

they'd give you a sad look that asked why you had rejected them and Jungkook didn't want to see that look on Jimin's face and--

And then, they watched as Rose smiled and kissed Jack and how they looked so happy and carefree and enraptured with each other… and Jungkook felt Jimin hands wrap around his bicep, using his arm as a pillow of sorts as he stared at the TV, not looking like he was even thinking twice about it.

Jungkook felt sweat start to bead across his brow, the grey shirt he was wearing too hot. Jimin's fingers skimmed up and down his arm, tracing lazy patterns into Jungkook's toned forearm. But Jimin was completely zoned out, as if he wasn't even aware of what he was doing, and Jungkook faintly remembered that day on the beach weeks ago when Jimin had done the same thing to Jihyun while they'd been sitting there in the sand. So naturally clung to his younger brother's arm, seeking attention and warmth and love.

Jimin's head was turning, then, and he was looking at Jungkook and Jungkook was looking back at him, eyes locked. And they were staring at each other, and Jungkook felt too much fucking weirdness in his body.

He wasn't stupid. He was still attracted to Jimin. That's why he'd gone to that fucking coffee shop Jimin worked at every morning for 4 months, forgetting every single day to get Jimin's number because Jimin made his head go blank. That's why he'd given Jimin his number months and months ago. A piece of paper he still hadn't thrown away for some reason. Really shouldn't have kept it.

But Jimin had kept it, too, hadn't he?

Jimin's eyes flicked over Jungkook's face, down to his lips for a split second, the flickering light from the TV blurring in the corner of Jungkook's vision as his focus narrowed solely on Jimin. The light caught in the colored discs of Jimin's gaze, cool brown lit up with the angle, and Jungkook saw the dark lashes below platinum bangs, saw the blooming flush staining Jimin's cheeks.

Jungkook thought Jimin was an easy person to fall in love with.

Maybe that's what Minwo had thought, too.

They were both snapped out of whatever trance they'd been in when Jin exclaimed something about his favorite part of the movie. Both Jungkook and Jimin blushed heavily, looking away, back to the screen. Jimin's awkwardness seemed to pass quickly, though, because he was staring at Jin, who was already standing up, motioning for Jimin to get up, too.

Jimin went along with it quickly, springing to his feet and rushing over to Jin. He grinned as Jimin turned, back towards the elder, closing his eyes as if he was on the bow of a ship. "Let's do the Titanic," Jimin laughed.

Jin reached forward, but instead of grabbing Jimin's sides, he grabbed Jimin right under the armpits, causing Jimin to buckle forward with a cute giggle. Apparently Jimin was ticklish as hell.

"You're going to make me fall off the ship!" Jimin whined.

Jin just smiled, a stupid smile on his face, already getting defensive. "You're supposed to do it like this!"

Jimin was smiling stupidly, too, cheeks pushed up into an adorable eye smile. "No, you have to grab here," Jimin said, patting his waist.

“Not under your arms?”

“You shouldn’t put your hands under my arms,” Jimin affirmed with an overly exasperated sigh, turning back around so that his back was facing Jin again.

“Jimin…” Jin started quoting. “Let go of it now.”

Jimin was trying to close his eyes, but turned around again. “Wait, not under the arms. You’re really going to make me fall.”

“Alright, alright.”

“It seems really deep down there,” Jimin said, peering down at the hardwood floor as if he was looking down into the ocean.

“So deep,” Jin agreed, looking at the same spot Jimin was. “Looks like there’s tuna.”

“I’m pretty sure this isn’t how the movie goes,” Yoongi muttered, though an amused smile was tugging at his stoic face.

“Jimin,” Jin said again, cutting Yoongi off with a look. “Close your eyes and trust me.”

Jimin closed his eyes, serenity painted into the smooth, youthful glow of his face. His hair was a little messed up, his lips trembling to keep from smiling, Jin’s hands now resting on his waist. And something weird wormed its way through Jungkook’s chest at the sight of it all.

Jimin was holding onto the back of the couch just behind Jungkook, suddenly letting go and leaning back. Jin smacked his back. “Yah! Don’t let go of it yet! Let go when I tell you!”

Jimin was laughing, running a hand through his hair to smooth it back down as the movie continued playing in the background, the scene already completely over and moving on while Jin and Jimin were still arguing.

“Jimin,” Jin tried again.

“Why are you yelling at me?” Jimin asked, laughing so hard he was starting to buckle forward into the couch, turning his head to look at Jin.

“Just hold it!”

“I don’t know!”

“Close your eyes!” Jin snapped. “Close your eyes, Jimin.”

Jimin did so for about… what was it now, the third or fourth time? Jungkook and Yoongi had long since given up on the movie, paying attention to the chaotic mess that was Jin and Jimin.

“Trust me and lean on me, and slowly let go.”

Jimin’s eyes were closed, lips parted a little, head tilted up as if he was feeling the cool breeze of the ocean on his face. Jin’s hands were on his waist again, securing him in place, and Jimin slowly let go of the couch, leaning back into Jin carefully. He started raising his arms up.

“Higher,” Jin murmured. “Don’t you feel like flying?”

The moment was ruined when Jimin shook his head, serene expression cracking into a light laugh

and an infectious smile. “No,” Jimin whined cutely.

“Now yell out loud,” Jin continued, his own eyes closed dramatically.

Jimin shook his head again, eyes pretty much completely closed with the smile on his face as he tipped his head back, laughing harder. *“Yell,”* Jimin said, making both him and Jin crumple into fits of laughter.

Yoongi was shaking his head, rolling his eyes as he went back to staring at his phone, but Jungkook couldn’t keep his eyes off of Jimin. Because this Jimin was also fucking beautiful when he laughed. The way he flopped onto Jin, unable to hold himself up. The way he could barely breathe with the laughs tumbling from his lips. The way he just *glowed.*

Jungkook was about to say something stupid when the doorbell rang. In the back of his head, he knew who it was as Jimin made his way around the couch, sitting down. Jin wandered over to the door.

Tae and Hoseok came in, stomping snow from their boots, a light storm swirling outside. Their teeth were chattering, noses red, grins big. Distracted Jungkook from hearing the small gasp from behind him, only noticed something was wrong when Hoseok froze, dropping everything in his hands, keys and phone clanging and clattering against the floor, mouth falling open, eyes wide.

Jungkook turned to look at what Hoseok was so terrified of, a swelling of hurt and confusion crashing through the room. And it was Jimin, Jimin who had stood back up, mirroring the look on Hobi’s face. Broken and lost and shocked.

“Jimin?”

Jimin took a step back, wide eyes flicking from Hoseok to Tae to Jungkook, back to the dancer. Stayed locked on Hobi. And Jungkook almost stepped between them because suddenly Hoseok was running for Jimin at full speed, fury and grief radiating from him.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading :) and for all of the wonderful comments. you guys give me too much credit haha <3

hope on the streets

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jungkook watched as Hoseok barrelled into Jimin, slamming him backwards a few steps, pulling him into a bone-crushing hug. Jimin was nearly knocked over, still frozen, arms hovering above Hobi's shoulder blades. Jungkook watched as Jimin carefully hugged him back, groaning softly at the force of the embrace.

Hoseok was shaking, and it took Jungkook a second to realize he was sobbing, face buried in the crook of Jimin's neck. Holding him as if he might disappear. But Jimin was very much real, very much there, and everyone else in the room was very much confused.

Jimin finally managed to pry Hoseok an inch away, the dancer's arms still firmly trapped around him. Tears slipped down Hoseok's face, cheeks soaked, dark spots on Jimin's shirt. But they were holding each other, Hoseok sobbing Jimin's name as the other was trying to hold back tears, looking away. Ashamed.

"Jimin," Hoseok cried, pulling Jimin into another hug. *"Jiminie~* I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. *"*

Jimin stiffened, back ramrod straight, locking up. He shook his head, prying himself from Hoseok's arms. Was shaking his head more urgently as Hoseok apologized again.

"I'm sorry, Jiminie. So fucking sorry. For everything."

"Hyung-"

"Please."

Jungkook had never seen Hoseok beg. Never seen him sob like he had with his arms around Jimin's boney shoulders.

"Jimin, please."

Jimin was staring at the ground, face pale. Pulled away again. Couldn't look at Hoseok.

"Jiminie, where have you been? What happened?"

Jimin was shaking his head, glancing at the other young men in the room. Jungkook was staring bullets at them both, trying to connect the dots as Hoseok rambled off panicked questions, trying to get Jimin to look at him.

"Why did you leave? *Where did you go?* "

"Hoseok-hyung," Jimin finally whispered, voice lowered into a soft plea. His gaze flitted around the room, the audience watching them.

"Jiminie," Hoseok pleaded. "Please, Jiminie. What happened? Why are you so skinny again? *I need to know.* "

Jimin was looking away, legs twitching to take a step back. He shook his head again, eyes dazed and confused.

"I thought you were dead," Hoseok sobbed, smearing the tears on his face with his palms. "I thought you were fucking dead for a *year."*

A year… Jungkook's mind was tingling, trying to piece together time frames, sew them up and patch them over with information. Because something… something was...

You asked me just now if I've ever hated someone... I have. I do. I hate a person I don't even know the name of, have never even met… You know the person you hate and you still chose to help.

Is this about your old roommate?

It doesn't matter, Jungkook-ah. Not anymore. It was a while ago.

Jungkook's head was spinning and twirling, the room closing in on all of them as he realized just how much more complicated everything had just gotten. How fucked up it all was.

Because it had to have been Jimin. Jimin who had been Hoseok's roommate a year ago. Because Hoseok had lived in Incheon, too. Had lived there until a year ago when his roommate left him, had moved his dance studio to Seoul. Their stories matched up perfectly. And knowing how obliterated Hoseok had been when he'd lost his roommate… when he'd lost *Jimin* ... it made Jungkook realize Hoseok hadn't known about Jimin and Minwo, either. Hadn't known who Jimin had been secretly fucking. And Jungkook didn't know how to feel, not at all.

Don't leave anything unresolved, Jungkook-ah. Resolve everything, even if it hurts. You'll regret it in the end if you don't.

It all made sense now.

Hoseok was shaking still, tears racing down his long face. He leaned forward, forehead resting on Jimin's shoulder, holding him so carefully. So, so carefully. Still whispering apologies.

"Hoseokie-hyung," Jimin murmured softly. He braced the back of Hoseok's head, ringed fingers threaded through the dancer's soft locks. "Why are you apologizing?"

Hoseok's chest shuddered with broken breaths as he pulled back, wiping at his tears. "Because it's my fault. If I had just-"

"Let's talk in private," Jimin interrupted quickly, eyes skirting around the room briefly before going back to Hoseok.

The dancer finally seemed to calm down enough to think, to register the many sets of stares focused on the two of them. But he didn't step back, didn't let up. He still had his arms desperately locked around Jimin as if he would never let go again.

"Jungkookie, we're borrowing your room," Hoseok said.

Jungkook bit back the inner child in him that wanted to complain, wanted to ask why it was always *his* room his hyungs chose for stuff like this. But he forced himself to nod, noticing the way Jimin had shrunk in on himself, legs shaking like he might collapse.

They all watched as Jimin and Hoseok disappeared up the stairs, the faint sound of Jungkook's bedroom door shutting filling the silence. And they were all quiet, eyes trained on where the two had disappeared.

"What the hell was that?" Tae asked.

Jungkook's jaw was locked, his hands balled into fists in his pants pockets. He poked his tongue into his cheek as his gaze wandered up to the ceiling, a blinding irritation coiling through his gut. Because why the fucking hell had Jimin hurt Hoseok like that? Kept such a secret?

Even though Hoseok hadn't told any of them much, Jungkook still remembered the brokeness the dancer had carried for months. The dark circles and bloodshot eyes from sleepless nights, from crying. How he'd started losing weight because he couldn't stomach the thought of food. The overwhelming *grief.*

It was one thing to lie to Jungkook, break him apart. It was another thing altogether to shatter one of Jungkook's hyungs. And it just reaffirmed the fact that Jungkook couldn't trust Jimin; Jimin was full of lies, lied about everything. Couldn't be trusted at all.

"So are we still watching a movie?" Jin asked sullenly.

Nobody graced him with a response.

It was almost three hours later when Jimin and Hoseok finally trudged back down the stairs. The lights were off and the TV was muted, Jungkook the only one awake. His other hyungs were sprawled across the couches, asleep.

Jimin and Hoseok were holding hands, both with red eyes and noses, faces puffy from crying. And they looked incredibly close, even after everything that had happened. Even after Jimin had hurt Hoseok so much. The pair seemed to pause as they realized Jungkook's gaze was boring holes into the both of them. Jimin was the first to let go of Hoseok's hand, and even then Hoseok wrapped an arm around Jimin's shoulders, holding him close.

Jungkook stood up from where he'd been sitting for the past three hours, texting Hayoon. Telling her everything. Because if there was one person that understood his side of the story the most, it was her.

"Either of you want to explain what the hell is going on?" Though Jungkook already thought he knew.

Jimin and Hoseok shared a weary glance before the elder stepped forward, voice lowered to a bare whisper. "We'll talk about it another time. I'm going to drive Jiminie home."

Jungkook glanced between the two of them, fiery gaze lingering on Jimin for a bit too long to be comfortable. Watched as they walked out the door, not looking back.

I'm coming over- Hayoon.

Mood: Sorry by Aquilo

Jimin shivered, curling his legs up into his chest. Rain was pouring down from the sky, mini rivers coursing down the sides of the streets, drenching everything in sight.

He was huddled behind a store next to a dumpster, head tipped back against the brick wall. Darkness and filth coated him like a second skin, and he welcomed the bone-chilling rain for the

fact that it washed some of the muck from him.

His little scrappy backpack was tucked between his legs and his chest, holding a few comics and a spare shirt he'd stolen from a thrift store. It was about two sizes too big for him, but it was a shirt regardless. He was almost ready to throw the one he was wearing away and change to the dry one in his backpack, but he figured he'd wait until the rain ended so that he'd at least have one piece of dry clothing to change into.

But as the rain continued to pour throughout the night, Jimin shivering relentlessly to the point his body started to ache, he stood up. Stepped from the pitiful cover of the dumpster and started walking. Where to, he didn't know. He never did. All he could focus on was getting away again.

This was his sixth time running away from a foster family, and each time he got better and better at staying away. But each time he also got stretched a little thinner, his heart a little bit more empty, his head a little quieter.

Still, he walked. And walked and walked and walked.

He heard the faint sound of music and came to a stop behind a building, not recalling how far he'd walked, only that this seemed as good a place as any to rest for the night. Found a little comfort in the music, even though it must be well past midnight.

So he leaned back against the wall, sinking to his knees, the rain still pouring. He took the same position he had earlier, with his bag tucked between his legs and his chest as he started drifting in and out of consciousness. Finally fell asleep for an hour or two.

He was so out of it he didn't realize there was somebody walking towards him, a hooded figure carrying a bag. So when the figure knelt next to him, reaching out and gripping his shoulder, Jimin had almost screamed, fear pumping icy cold through his blood.

Because the first thought going through his head was that they *had found him. That he was going back to the foster people. And there was no way in hell he would be doing that. He immediately shoved away from the person, clutching his backpack tightly to his chest. Kicked out at the person's legs, trying to trip them. Do anything to buy himself time to escape.*

But the person tipped their hood back, holding their hands out in surrender, taking a few steps back. "Hey, I'm not going to hurt you. I just wanted to know if you're okay."

Jimin blinked up at the stranger through his dripping wet, unkempt bangs. His eyes narrowed as he looked the person up and down, trying to decide if this was one of the social workers trying to steal him away, trying to convince him to go back peacefully… looked a little too young… but Jimin couldn't think about that, couldn't rule it out.

"I'm not going with you," Jimin hissed, scooting away even more.

The stranger shook his head. "No, no. I'm not- God, I'm not taking you anywhere."

"Who are you?" Jimin snapped, legs already aching to bolt. "What do you want from me?"

The guy shook his head again, motioning to the heavy duffle bag. "I dance here. I came out the back and saw you. I promise I'm not trying to hurt you. I just wanted to know if you were okay."

Jimin blinked at him, only then realizing the music had stopped. That the night was empty and silent except for the trickling rain. Noticed only then that the guy was wearing workout clothing, that his duffle bag had a sports logo on it. "Oh."

The stranger took a slow, cautious step towards him. "What's your name?"

Jimin's cheeks were burning with embarrassment at having accused the guy so readily, but he managed to choke out his name anyways.

"Park Jimin, huh?"

Jimin nodded.

"I'm Jung Hoseok. People call me Hobi for short."

Jimin didn't say anything to that, only stared up at Hoseok awkwardly, not knowing what to do or say.

"How old are you, Jimin?"

"14."

"Do you live around here?"

"No."

Hoseok looked up and down the small alleyway, playing with the strap to his dufflebag. "Why are you out here in the rain?"

Jimin's eyes fell down to the ground, clutching his backpack tighter to his chest. "I don't have anywhere else to go."

"What about your parents?"

Jimin didn't say anything to that either, mouth pressed into a thin line. The only family he had left was his brother, and he hadn't seen Jihyun in months. Hadn't even been able to talk to him on the phone in weeks. His one purpose for living had been taken away from him, and now he had nothing left.

"Are you hungry?" Hoseok asked.

Jimin finally lifted his head, looking up at Hoseok shyly as his stomach flared to life, rumbling with hunger at the question.

Hoseok pulled out his phone, texting someone. After he was done, he tucked the phone back into his pocket and took a few steps closer to Jimin, closing the distance. Jimin panicked at first as Hoseok sat next to him.

"You'll get your clothes wet," Jimin warned, eyeing the layer of water pooled over the ground.

Hoseok scoffed. "You're worried about me *getting wet?" His eyes flicked over Jimin's drenched, shivering, boney form. "Do you even have a jacket?"*

Jimin rubbed at his bare arms, slick with rain. Shook his head, feeling embarrassed once more. All he had were the clothes on his back, a ratty extra T shirt, and some faded comic books he'd stolen from his foster family.

He heard Hoseok shuffling around beside him. Jimin flinched back, nearly falling over as he felt something soft and warm and dry draped over his shoulders.

“No,” Jimin protested, shaking his head. “You’ll get a cold.”

Hoseok shrugged. “I’ve been dancing for the past few hours and I’m too hot anyways. The rain feels nice.”

Jimin couldn’t help the guilt that curled through his gut. He hated kind people for this very reason. Hated them because there weren’t enough in the world, and when you did find someone kind, they were burdened with the care they gave.

“Do you like bibimbap?” Hoseok asked.

Jimin’s head snapped to the side, staring at Hoseok. “What…”

“My mom made some for dinner earlier and we have leftovers.”

Jimin wasn’t quite sure what Hoseok was saying, but if it had to do with getting food, Jimin was ashamedly interested.

“So do you like it? If not we have rice, and I could probably cook you some meat to go with it…”

Jimin blinked at him. “You mean… like, at your house?”

Hoseok scratched the back of his neck awkwardly. “Yeah… I could bring it to you.” He looked Jimin over again, how he was clutching at the dancer’s jacket, shivering still. “Or you could just come with me. I’m not trying to kidnap you or anything. I’m actually only 15… so I don’t know why I would… kidnap you… or anything...”

Jimin found himself staring at the odd guy, not knowing what to think. Still felt a little too weary to take Hoseok up on his offer. “Why are you out so late if you’re only a year older than me? Shouldn’t you be at home?”

Hoseok laughed nervously. “I sneak out to dance.”

Jimin nodded, thinking back to when he’d actually done the very same thing. Before he’d been uprooted from his little hell with his parents and thrown into the foster system. He’d always loved to dance, had learned popping out in the streets. But he hadn’t danced in at least a year.

“You should just come with me, Jimin. Come on. You can sleep in my room tonight and eat bibimbap.”

Jimin hesitated, playing with the strings on his backpack. Knew this was how children went missing. But the offer of food and warmth was too tempting to resist. “Won’t your mom get mad?”

Hoseok laughed at that, too, standing up. He offered Jimin his hand. “Probably.”

Jimin shoved away every instinct in his body compelling him to run. Shoved it away and, with a shaky breath, took Hoseok’s hand. Because maybe, maybe there was a little hope on these streets for him after all.

Mood: six feet under by Billie Eilish

Jimin heaved out one shuddering breath after another, watching the night sky as buildings blurred past. The car ride was silent, so much hurt laced between the two of them that Jimin wasn’t sure

what he even could say now. What he had left to say.

There was a lot they'd already spoken about. A lot Jimin still *hadn't* told him. Hadn't told Hoseok how Minwo beat him, controlled his every aspect of living. But Jimin's heart was aching and raw right now, too exposed to tell Hobi more. Didn't want to worry him.

Jimin had lost a part of himself when he'd run away from Hoseok. The day a little over a year ago Minwo had finally convinced him to move out of the little apartment the dancers had shared for two years, to cut ties so that he and Minwo "could be closer as a couple." And that day, leaving nothing behind but a note that begged Hoseok not to look for him, not to call because he was changing his number, not to worry… that had been the start of another hell for Jimin.

He never should've left.

Jimin directed Hoseok to Minwo's house, and as the dancer put the car into park, neither of them made a move. Neither of them said anything for a while. Jimin was staring at the dark prison he lived in and Hoseok was staring at his hands on the steering wheel.

"Can I get your phone number?" Jimin asked meekly, still not looking over.

Hoseok dug around in the middle console before pulling out a piece of paper, silently scribbling his number on it and handing it over to Jimin. Jimin took it with a trembling hand, the scenario too familiar.

Because in his mind it was Jungkook's hand, Jungkook giving Jimin his number with a quirked brow. A number Jimin had erased from his call history not a month ago, but had written on the underside of his bed in barely perceptible pencil right next to Jihyun's… just in case…

And now he would have Hoseok's.

"I'll walk you up to the door."

Jimin looked over at Hoseok for a long moment, almost regretting everything he'd told his best friend. But he didn't say anything as Hobi unbuckled his seatbelt, opening his door.

They walked up to the big maroon door in silence. Jimin's heart started pounding as he got closer, knowing he might not be able to see his friend for a while after this. Didn't want to leave things on such shakey ground. But there was nothing he could do. Minwo would be back in a few days.

As Jimin fumbled with the key to the house, Hoseok watched him. Tears began shimmering in the dancer's eyes as Jimin dropped the keys, hands shaking too much. And Hoseok was pulling Jimin into another embrace, arms suffocatingly tight around Jimin's thin frame.

"I love you, Jiminie," Hoseok murmured, burying his face in Jimin's shoulder again.

Jimin smoothed a hand up and down the dancer's back. "I love you, too."

"I miss you."

Jimin rested his own chin on Hoseok's shoulder. Hoseok squeezed even tighter, and Jimin swore his ribs were going to cave in from the force of it. His usually cheerful, hopeful hyung was too sad. Too hurt. All because of what Jimin had done. All because Jimin was too selfish, had listened to every word Minwo had said.

"I'm sorry," Jimin mumbled softly. "I never should've left you." Jimin carded his fingers through

Hoseok’s hair one last time. “I’m sorry.”

Chapter End Notes

thoughts? impressions? feels?
lemme know :)
thanks for the love <3

push me, drown me, hold me

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Panic Room by Au/Ra

Jungkook's hands were slathered with blood. Hot, sticky, pungent blood creeping all the way up to his elbows. Webs, dark webs slithering like poisonous veins, obsidian and crimson. And it was his fault.

He clawed at the blood, trying to pry it from his skin, get it off. Fucking hell, it was everywhere. Blood, blood, blood.

"You know what you did to her. God knows what you did to her. You can draw this out for as long as you want, but my fucking sister is in a fucking coma and when she wakes up, you'll go to prison for the rest of your life and rot in hell."

"Ms. Lee, that's enough."

"Fuck you, Jeon Jungkook. You're a fucking monster."

Darkness, swallowing him whole. Drowning and slipping into the dark depths of an icy, bitter ocean. Inhaling water, burning lungs. Ripping his bones, grinding them up into fine dust.

Water pattering down over his body. Jungkook hugged himself, shivering beneath the cold prison showers. He always took them as fast as he could, didn't want to spend too much time in the stalls. The showers didn't have security cameras; it was easy to wash blood down the drains.

His bed was a slat of iron, his heart thrumming faster and faster. Fuck, couldn't breathe, couldn't choke air into his lungs. Blood leeching and sucking at his arms. Scratched and scratched, couldn't get it off.

"Mr. Kim, is there any doubt in your mind that Mr. Jeon was capable of committing this crime?"

"No, sir. I have no doubt whatsoever that Jungkook assaulted Ms. Lee."

A smattering of whispers from the jury.

Jungkook hit the floor with a broken gasp, shocks and trembles zagging down his spine, seizing his hands, his legs. Numb, everything numb where the blood touched. So much, all over, everywhere. Her body, her body was at his fingertips, barely breathing.

Three men behind him. Three. Jungkook was alone, no hyungs to protect him. He grabbed for his towel, heart spiking hard in his chest as he excused himself, trying to edge past them.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"Mr. Jeon Jungkook isn't living so high up anymore, is he?"

"Think you can fucking assault a woman and get away with it?"

Heavy hands yanking him back into the shower stall. Shoved him hard into the cement wall, towel slipping dangerously low. Towering over him, boxing him in, freezing him up. The shower curtain slid closed.

He had to get out. Get out get out get out-

Nowhere to go. Four walls, no door. No fucking door. Another solitary confinement cell. Jungkook was drenched in blood at this point, hands melting away, dissipating as he scratched at the crimson, tried to scrub it from his skin.

Crawled across the floor to a corner, tripping over dark lumps on the rug. Bodies. He was surrounded by her body. Everywhere, her face. Her face, battered and bruised and puffy and swollen and leaking blood, blood, blood.

"This--" A picture of the assistant, glaring and bright in the dim lighting of the frigid courtroom. "--is what you did to Ms. Lee on December 4th. Look at this picture, look long and hard, Mr. Jeon."

"I didn't-"

"Even if she wakes up, she'll most likely never have full motor abilities again. She'll never live a normal life. She'll never dance, she'll never run, she might not even walk again. And for what? Why did you do it? Why take away her life like this?"

"I didn't… I didn't do it. I-"

"Your DNA was found all over her body. You were the last person to see her. She was in your personal office. Remind the jury how many people have access to your personal office."

A pause; a beat of silence. "Only Namjoon and myself."

"And Mr. Kim Namjoon was in Japan."

"Yes."

Jungkook found the corner of the room, pressing himself into it, dragging blunt nails up and down the delicate skin of his forearms. Up and down, harder and sharper. Dug at his skin, if only to get her blood from his hands.

A door opening; someone coming in. A shadow, looming over him. Hands, hands all over him.

Pain sizzled through Jungkook's skull as it was slammed back into the low hanging shower head, smacking against the cement wall behind. And then there were three pairs of hands raining blows. His stomach punched in, knuckles at his throat, red coating his vision.

Blood, blood swirling with the drain water.

"The video footage was erased for the entirety of that night. Who else has access to it?"

"Only myself."

The lawyer turned to face the jury, pointing a crooked finger into Jungkook's reputation. "This man…" A flicker of the assistant's battered, broken body flashed onto the screen. "He did this. This monster manipulated thousands of people, our entire nation even, and he needs to be punished for it."

Monster.

Monster.

Monster.

Someone slamming into him from behind, strong arms locked securely around the maknae to keep him in place. Running a hand through his hair, pulling his arms apart.

“Jungkook--”

Jungkook tried jerking his elbow into the person behind him. But they were too strong. And Jungkook was weak, weak with shivers and trembles and gasps. And the blood was fading from his vision, long, red scratches replacing crimson.

Prison guards got there a little too late.

Jungkook watched his life fall apart at the hands of a jury.

Hands hanging on, hanging on.

Jungkook was a broken mess of bloodied limbs and bruised skin.

Monster, he was a monster. He’d done this.

Hands, calming and soothing and stroking his trembles into silent, gasping sobs.

But he deserved it, is what the thugs had chanted. And somewhere along the way it etched itself into Jungkook’s head.

And he deserved it, is what the prosecutors said. What the family said. What everyone said.

He deserved it, Jungkook thought as he was finally coming to, recognizing the person as Tae, arms still firmly locked around the maknae. And Jungkook gave up, his body twitching with aches, his arms stinging with pink slashes, fingernails filled with skin.

“You didn’t deserve it,” Tae murmured, holding on tightly, so tightly. “You didn’t.”

“You’re home late.”

Jimin winced, spotting a silhouette in the darkness of their living room. Hoseok was sitting on the couch, bags under his eyes, brows lowered in concern and frustration. A light flicked on, a lamp filling the room with golden hues.

“I missed the train.”

“You miss it every night.”

Jimin shrugged, chin dipped down, bangs in his face. “I lose track of time.”

Hoseok was standing up from the couch, then. Made his way over to Jimin, edging in closer. “Jimin-ah, won’t you tell me what’s going on?”

Jimin turned his face even more away from Hobi's line of sight. "I'm fine. Just tired."

"Jimin… you know that's not what I mean."

"Then what do you mean?" Jimin snapped, a spot of guilt already inking up his gut.

"You dropped out of university. You quit both your jobs. You don't even bother with dance rehearsals or practices-"

"Maybe I don't want to."

"Jimin," Hoseok was saying, hand on Jimin's shoulder. "I'm worried. You won't even tell me who it is you're spending so much time with . Why can't you tell me?"

Jimin shook his head, brushing Hoseok off, shouldering past him as he made his way into their dingey little kitchen. "Maybe it's none of your fucking business."

"What's wrong with you?" Hoseok asked, trailing after Jimin into the kitchen. "You're being an asshole."

Jimin scoffed, turning his back to his best friend. "Just go to bed, hyung."

"We need to talk about this. I'm worried."

"You don't have to worry. I'm not your fucking child."

"Jimin-"

"Stop it," Jimin snapped out, feeling Hoseok's hand on his shoulder. "Just leave me alone."

"Let me see your face."

Jimin froze, his shoulders tensing. He tried to shrug out of Hoseok's grip, but his best friend was being stubborn tonight. This situation had happened before, but Jimin had always had an excuse. Always had a way out. Tonight, though… he knew there was no way he'd be able to convince Hoseok that his fat lip and black eye were an accident.

"Fuck, Jimin… your face--"

"It's nothing."

"Jimin-ah… who's doing this to you? Who hurts you like this?"

Jimin ripped away, pushing Hoseok's arms off his shoulders. "It's nothing," he stressed again.

"It's not nothing. You're hurt."

"I'm not. It's fine."

"Jimin-"

"Just stop," Jimin hissed, too much fucking anger shocking through him. Anger, frustration, hurt-- it pent itself up in Jimin's blood, flowing so freely through him these days. "It's none of your fucking business."

"It is my business. You *are my business."*

“No, I’m not. Just leave me alone.” Jimin tried to shove past Hoseok, tried to make his way to his room.

Hoseok caught Jimin’s wrist. “We need to talk about this. We need to talk about what’s going on.”

“Nothing is going on. There’s nothing to talk about.” He pried Hoseok’s hand off his wrist,

“So what? You’re not even going to tell me?”

“I can’t. I can’t tell you.”

“Then lie to me. Tell me any damn lie you want. Just tell me something.”

Jimin didn’t say anything.

“Is it your father?”

Jimin whirled around, eyes full of fire. “Would you just stop? God, it’s my life. Just leave me the fuck alone.”

Hoseok swallowed hard, hands balling into fists. “I only ask because I care. I care about you so much.”

“Maybe I don’t.”

He’d always been one to let emotions affect his actions too much. That’s what others had always told him. But in that moment, he didn’t particularly care. He’d had enough of the same argument every time he came home with a bruise; it was exhausting. He was exhausted. Worn out, tired.

“What?” There were tears pricking Hoseok’s eyes. “You don’t care? Really? You’re really going there?

Jimin’s throat was sore with the effort not to cry, so much pressure crushing him up he choked. “I… I just want you to leave me alone.”

Hoseok crossed his arms over his stomach, holding himself together as he tears pooled in his glossy brown eyes. Tracked wet streaks down his cheeks as they fell. “Then I don’t fucking care either.” And then he was storming towards the door, grabbing his jacket. Clutching his keys too hard in his hand as hinges creaked, frame shaking with the slam of the front door.

Jimin collapsed to the floor, shoving his fist in his mouth as he leaned forward, forehead touching the cool tile. Couldn’t breathe, couldn’t breathe as his ribs compressed, his lungs quaking with the building sob that tore through him.

They’d fought before. Fights had gotten even worse over the last few weeks. But there were lines they’d never crossed before, things Jimin had never thought to say, to spit out. Words from fights with Minwo that had slipped into the wrong argument.

Hoseok didn’t come back that night.

~~*Leave him. He’s no good to you. Come live with me, Min-ah. He’s only holding you back. Think about how good it would be to live together. We would be so happy.*~~

Jimin pushed himself up, tears caught in his lashes as he stumbled his way to his room. And he packed.

Mood: If You Want Love by NF

Jungkook flicked on the lights, echoing snaps filling the air as the lights flickered on from one end of the room to the other. And the maknae's heart leapt, realizing he wasn't alone. Eyes locked on a figure hunched over like a marionette doll with snipped strings.

"Hyung?" Jungkook asked, voice raw from the previous night.

Hoseok was sitting at the far end of the practice room, shoulders slumped, hair messy and eyes bloodshot. He was staring at himself in the wall of mirrors, a little scruff shadowing his jaw.

Jungkook set his duffle bag by the door, walking straight over to the broken dancer. Knelt next to him, tipping his head down to look Hoseok in the eye, hand on his hyung's shoulder. "Hyung?"

Hoseok met Jungkook's gaze for a split second before he shattered beneath the maknae's touch, leaning into Jungkook as hurt slammed through the air. Jungkook shivered at the unfiltered rage in the slopes and lines of Hoseok's face.

"I hate him," Hoseok hissed through gritted teeth, hot tears spilling down his cheeks. But there was no real malice. Only hurt, only anguish.

Jungkook wrapped his arms around his hyung, making sure his long sleeves didn't reveal the scratches all over his forearms. "No, you don't," he murmured gently.

Hoseok's eyes shut tightly as he hiccuped through a cry, shoulders quivering. "It hurts, Jungkook-ah," he gasped out, shaking his head. "It hurts."

"What does? What hurts?"

Hoseok's cries turned high and keening, and Jungkook hadn't seen him like this in months. Hadn't seen him like this since Jimin had left. Because Hoseok had walked around like the life had been sucked from him for weeks after Jungkook had gotten out of prison. Had walked around with such a fractured devastation chained to him that Jungkook had nearly broken himself apart trying to help.

Jungkook just held him. Held Hoseok until the agony ebbed, until the tears were pouring hot and slow, not so fast. Just held his hyung. And it was a while. A while until Hoseok even spoke, until he was able to speak.

"The last time I saw him… we fought. I told him I didn't care about him. Those were my last words. And he just… left. And I thought he was dead, Jungkook-ah. I thought he was dead for a year."

Jungkook swallowed the urge to cry along with Hoseok, wanted to be strong.

"I… I was just getting better," Hoseok breathed, eyes closed. "It was just getting to the point where I felt like I could be happy again. Where I didn't see his face every time I closed my eyes. And then he was just standing there in your living room. Just… there. After a year, and he was alive this whole time, and you guys knew him…"

Jungkook's eyes were burning as he bit his lip, hating himself for wanting to cry.

"I've hated myself for a year," the dancer whispered. "I hate myself so much for what I said that

night. I never got a chance to tell him I was sorry. And I thought he was dead. He was dead. He was gone; he was dead." Hoseok heaved out another choked cry, burying his face in his hands. "I hate him. I hate him for making me hurt so much. But I love him too much to hate him. Does that make sense?"

Jungkook nodded slowly. "It does. I understand."

Hoseok didn't say anything else.

Jungkook stayed with Hoseok for the rest of the day, just holding him.

Jimin was working out.

Trying to, at least.

He was laying on the floor in the makeshift gym Minwo had in the basement. The floor was concrete, the walls unfinished drywall, several machines for lifting weights or running surrounding him, a punching bag in the corner. A bright, cold light shown down on the room, harsh and blinding. But Jimin laid there anyways, arm slung over his eyes.

He'd already gotten a call from Minwo that morning and afternoon. Now, he would just have to wait for the nightly call before he could go to bed. But he was restless.

Why can't I leave?

He groaned, finally sitting up, stretching out his limbs. He spread his legs until he was in a full split, leaning forward and touching his chest to the floor, loving the burn the stretching caused.

Minwo's lover.

Jimin flinched. Sat up from the stretch, running a hand through his hair, finally standing up. He was pacing, pacing and pacing for what seemed like an eternity, couldn't stand stll.

Jimin kicked at the concrete with the tip of his shoe, hands threaded through his hair as he fought off the warring emotions inside of him. He knew Minwo wasn't good for him, knew his boyfriend was slowly killing him inside, even if he would never admit it out loud.

He'd wait, see what he could do. Minwo was coming home tomorrow, and Jimin thought he could work things out. That there was still hope for them. Because he loved Minwo, and maybe if he tried harder, things would get better.

But he couldn't *just leave.*

Not yet.

Chapter End Notes

sorry i didn't post for a few days. idk i was in a bit of a slump with this story and i

ended up completely scrapping the next chapter and writing this one... thank you for all the comments and concern tho. i love you guys :3 please let me know your thoughts on this chapter. thank you!

don't let him hurt you

Chapter Notes

Read the warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jungkook sat up, rubbing a hand down his face. The lighting in the room was dim, early morning peeking through the blinds, a dark, electric blue. He groaned, throat hot and dry as he looked over at Hayoon. She was awake, looking back at him with a sort of sadness in her gaze that always came the morning after.

“You should probably get going. My hyungs are getting up soon.”

She nodded, nuzzling a little into her pillow. Her eyes were a little watery, her heart a little broken, and Jungkook shifted closer seeing that hurt.

“Hey, are you okay?”

She didn’t say anything, but she didn’t have to. They were in this together for the distraction, and Jungkook had many mornings of his own where he woke up feeling torn apart by everything that’d been happening.

“It’ll be okay, Hayoonie,” he murmured, the only comfort he could really offer.

She closed her eyes. “I know. I just need a minute.”

Jungkook sighed, holding her for a moment longer before he pushed up and stood from the bed, tucking her in under the blankets, letting her know she could stay a little longer. He knew how hard it must be for her, going through what she did every single day. His heart hurt for her, and once again he was sorry he couldn’t do more to help erase that inky blotch in her happiness.

He made his way into the bathroom and turned the shower on, waiting as it heated up, steam fogging up the mirrors. Didn’t turn the fan on. He let the heat soak into his lungs as he breathed in and out, stepping into the scalding water, flinching at the hot sting at first.

Last night… he didn’t know what it was, but he hadn’t been able to stop thinking about Jimin. Had been too confused, too flooded. Hadn’t been able to stop thinking about soft lips and crescent eyes. So he’d figured he was just too frustrated, needed Hayoon to fuck the feelings out of him.

But even during their few rounds last night, Jungkook had closed his eyes. Had imagined a slightly bigger body beneath his, leaner, more muscled. Had imagined platinum hair and cream-caramel skin and promises. Had imagined things he shouldn’t have.

As he stood beneath the pelting stream of the shower, he washed last night off like a sin. Felt too weird about it. Felt like it had been wrong to think about Jimin, about Minwo’s lover, while he had been fucking someone else.

Minwo’s lover…

When he got out of the shower Hayoon was gone. The maknae sighed before straightening up, getting rid of the evidence that anything had happened, though he knew his hyungs were already fully aware of what was going on.

He needed to take a break, needed to stop seeing so much of Jimin. Because despite Jihyun's pleas and Hoseok's pain, Jungkook was getting too confused. He needed to take a step back before the weirdness in him grew any bigger. So he would wait until he knew Minwo was back. Keep on track with his plan. Knew it was fucked up to hope Jimin would get beaten up, but needed it to happen. Needed it in order to get his life back.

He couldn't keep Jihyun's promise.

And he couldn't think about Hoseok's sobs.

Jungkook sighed, running a hand through his wet hair, pulling on a warm, dry shirt. He made his way downstairs, relieved to see that none of his hyungs were awake yet, relieved that none of them had seen Hayoon slip out the front door.

He went into the kitchen, grabbing a banana. Wasn't super hungry, but started eating it anyways, began scrolling through his phone. It was about an hour before anyone else came downstairs. And it was pounding footsteps, rushed breaths, dropped curses. Jin ran into the kitchen, making the maknae look up at him, amused.

"Late for a work meeting again?"

Jin glared at him. "Be quiet."

Jungkook grinned his bunny grin as Jin made a dash for the door, slinging a bag over his shoulder. He was gone before Jungkook had time to say anything else.

Next was Tae, who looked noticeably less awake trudging down the stairs than Jin had. Probably had a later appointment for work that day or something. His bleach blond hair was wet from a shower and he was still in his signature silk pajamas, wearing bunny slippers. Jungkook watched as Tae shuffled over to him, then flopped down on the couch, sprawling across the maknae's lap.

Jungkook laughed, running his hands through Tae's wet hair. "Didn't get enough sleep?"

Tae shook his head, burying his face in Jungkook's shirt.

"Go back to bed, then," Jungkook suggested.

"Meeting with a client in an hour."

Jungkook only laughed at that, too. Laughed more at the sleepy, groggy tone Tae was mumbling in. Tae went quiet eventually, probably having fallen back asleep as the maknae continued scrolling through Twitter.

He saw a few news articles people had retweeted about the assistant from GCF still being in a coma.

He sighed, remembering how Jimin had looked at him, gaze searching. Trying to match the crime to the criminal. But Jungkook hadn't done it, and he thought maybe he saw that in Jimin's eyes. But it didn't make sense why Jimin would question that now, especially after all that had happened.

Eventually, Tae got up and started eating breakfast, disappearing back upstairs to get dressed for work. Meanwhile, Jungkook continued reading through more articles about the assistant.

… might have a chance of waking up… family is hopeful… be able to testify… could be years before this case is solved…

Years.

Jungkook groaned, turning off his phone. He couldn't wait years to move on with his life. Couldn't wait that long to get his company back, to start living again. Because right now he was in stasis. Stuck, frozen in a never-ending frustration because for once he had no control over his own fate.

Well, *almost* no control.

He had a camera. And he had Park Jimin. And those two things might be able to set everything right. Even though Jungkook still had reservations about it, still hadn't even touched his camera, he felt a little less bad about the whole thing. Because Jimin had hurt Hoseok, hadn't been able to tell the fucking truth.

How many other secrets did Jimin have tucked up his sleeves?

There's a lot you don't know about me.

Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Depends. There's a good and bad to anything.

He was tired of the lies, felt too caught up in them lately. He needed answers. And he needed a way to get his life back.

Mood: like that by Bea Miller

Jimin had the table set, had a cake cooking in the oven and dinner on the table when the doorknob rattled. His heart jumped in his chest, beating hard and fast, frightened. Knew it wasn't logical to be scared of his own boyfriend.

Minwo didn't say anything when he came in. Only tossed his bags to the side and strode up to Jimin, pulling him into a sloppy, claiming kiss. Backed Jimin up against the counter, sucking and biting at his mouth, pulling on his hair. Jimin let Minwo kiss him. Tried to kiss him back.

"Did you miss me, Min-ah?"

Jimin nodded enthusiastically. Anything less and he'd be punished. "I prepared dinner for you."

Minwo leaned down and kissed Jimin again. "That's a good boy. You really did miss me."

Jimin carefully placed his hands on Minwo's shoulders, cupping them gently as he pushed Minwo back a little, breaking the kiss. A flash of annoyance crossed his boyfriend's face, but Jimin had seen something on Minwo's neck, something that looked like a bruise. Jimin slowly reached up to touch it, eyes widening. "What is this?"

Minwo slapped his hand away, agitated. "I just got home. Come on, Min-ah. Let's have dinner."

Jimin shook his head, feeling the purple and blue bruise beneath his fingertips. “Is this a hickey?”

Minwo rolled his eyes, anger slowly penetrating the air between them. “You think you have the right to ask me something like that?”

Jimin’s mouth shut tight, looked down at the ground. Shook his head quickly. “No, no. I just- I don’t know… what it is.”

“It’s not a fucking hickey,” Minwo snapped, shoving at Jimin’s boney shoulder.

Jimin held his hands up in defense. “Okay, okay. I’m sorry. You’re right. Let’s have dinner.”

Minwo watched Jimin with raging eyes for a moment before he grunted out an agreement, making his way to the table, to his usual spot. Jimin went to the oven, grabbing the cake he’d made and walking over to the table, setting it down on a hot pad. He’d fried an assortment of meats, a plate of freshly cut lettuce and some sauces set to the side to make the wraps. Minwo had already started eating, was staring at Jimin, who picked at the lettuce.

“You’ve gained weight.”

Jimin flinched.

“Have you been eating out?”

Jimin shook his head quickly. “No. I forgot to work out a few times.”

Minwo’s eyes narrowed before he shook his head in disappointment, making himself another wrap.

“How was Japan?” Jimin asked carefully, eyes still flitting to that hickey on his boyfriend’s neck.

Minwo scoffed. “Now you ask me? You never asked me while I was away.”

Jimin looked down at his plate, not very hungry anymore. “Sorry.”

Minwo was quiet, finishing off his wrap, chewing slowly. “It was great. Didn’t have to put up with your whining for an entire month. Best vacation I’ve had in a long time.”

Jimin missed Jihyun now more than ever, a sharp pang shooting through his chest. Strangely missed Jungkook, too, even though they’d only seen each other three times in that entire month. Missed Hoseok so badly it hurt.

Don’t let him hurt you.

“Why would you say something like that?” Jimin asked, a sudden boldness rising in him.

Minwo’s gaze snapped up from his dinner, full of simmering fire. “Something like *what?”*

“That Japan was great because you didn’t have to put up with me.”

Minwo rolled his eyes. “I didn’t say that.”

“You did.”

“Min-ah,” Minwo warned. “I didn’t say a damn thing. You’re making stuff up.”

Why do you keep calling me his lover?

Maybe because nobody knows about you?

Jimin folded his arms across his chest, glaring at Minwo. Was shocked at the amount of rage that bubbled up into his chest, expanding and overflowing. Heat, heat coating his body like a glove, small hands clenching into fists. “And you’re not? Who did you fuck to get that hickey on your neck?”

Minwo stood up in a flash, slamming his fists down on the table, glass plates and cups rattling against the wood surface. “You shut the fuck up! You have no fucking right to accuse me-”

“No right? I-”

“You think you can ask me about what I do when you’re off fucking everyone who comes your way?”

Jimin stood up, arms wrapped tightly around his middle, stance rigid. “I have *never* cheated on you. Not once!”

Minwo’s eyes sharpened into dangerous slits. “What about that note, huh? I saw him give it to you and you fucking took it.”

“That was months ago! Why would I still have it?” Jimin snapped, pushing aside the knot in his chest that was screaming at him to tell the truth.

“Why wouldn’t you? He was hitting on you! Do you know how that makes me feel?”

Jimin ran a hand through his hair, tugging at the silky locks in frustration. “I’m not the one coming home with a fucking hickey. I’m not the whore here.”

Minwo slammed his fists down on the table again, plates rattling. “What did you just fucking call me?”

Jimin was staring straight at Minwo. “Do you think I’m stupid? Do you think I don’t know what a hickey is?”

Jimin’s heart was beating so hard in his chest he could barely breathe. And it was almost as if he was looking down at himself from outside his body. Saw how skinny and hurt he had become. Knew he wouldn’t have this boldness without Jihyun visiting, without seeing Hoseok again, without being around Jungkook. Because he had been reminded what it was like to be treated like a person again.

“So what if it’s a hickey? So what? What are you gonna do about it?” Minwo growled, vein popping out on his forehead.

Red was the only color Jimin could see. Jihyun and Jungkook and Hoseok flashed through his mind. “I’ll fucking leave.”

“You’ll leave?” Minwo forced out a bitter laugh. “And where will you fucking go? You have *no one.”*

“You want to know something?” Jimin laughed, tears blurring his vision. Thought about how this scene was so fucking familiar. How he’d grown up watching this, always thought he’d be different. “I *did* keep that paper. And that night you kicked me out? I stayed at Jungkook’s house.”

Minwo made a dash around the table. Jimin’s legs went numb with adrenaline as he dodged around

to the other side, mirroring Minwo. The monster in front of him swept his hand over the table top, flinging glasses and plates and food onto the floor, glass shattering.

“I also went out with Jihyun *every single day* while you were gone.”

“Little fucking *bitch!”*

“I saw Hoseok just two days ago, and guess where I saw him? At Jungkook’s house.”

Jimin didn’t see it coming, didn’t see Minwo grab a plate and toss it, lightning fast. The plate smashed into his temple, a heavy thud sounding as he was knocked to the side.

slow burning agony… burning

burning

burning *agony* pulsing out…

pulsing where he’d been hit

And then he was being tackled. Small form too weak to stand a chance. Fist. Four fingers, thumb tucked in. Knuckles white as they slammed down into Jimin over and over again.

Started seeing purple and black and white stars. Grabbed and scratched at anything he could get his hands on. His arms were whacked down into the floor, stinging and stinging.

Minwo grabbed Jimin by his shoulders and started knocking him back into the floor over and over again. Skull smacking against hardwood. Minwo was shaking him, grip tearing him apart.

room *spinning*

spinning

twirling

upside down

“Fucking *bitch,* fucking *whore,* little fucking *liar-”*

Jimin was being pulled to his feet by his scalp, eyes swelling shut, limbs locking up. Couldn’t support himself as Minwo threw him against a wall. Started kicking him in the shins until Jimin was sobbing, coughing out blood, begging Minwo to stop because it felt like his bones were splintering.

Felt like they would snap

And then Minwo’s hands were around his neck, pressing tighter and tighter. Jimin clawed at Minwo’s wrists, desperately gasping for air. Minwo slammed Jimin’s head back against the wall--

Don’t let him hurt you.

Jungkook lowered his camera.

Nearly dropped it as his mouth fell open in mute horror. Nausea curled through his gut, legs going

numb with fear. He turned away from the brutal beating, the sounds of Jimin's barely audible cries of agony coming from the house.

And he ran.

Jungkook sighed heavily, scrubbing his hands over his face, rubbing at his tired eyes. He sat back in his big chair, the computer screen in front of him filled with all sorts of photos and videos he had to approve and suggest edits for before tomorrow's board meeting.

It had to have been 1 in the morning, the harsh blue light from the screens making his eyes ache with the effort of staying awake. While he clicked away, editing more photos, his phone buzzed. He briefly glanced at it, saw that it was Namjoon. He sighed, a light smile tugging at his lips as he grabbed his phone.

"You're still at work, aren't you?"

Jungkook grinned his bunny grin, knowing the exact face his hyung would be making right now. Namjoon's lips would be pursed, dimples showing, shaking his head while looking down with a smile threatening his face.

"Just wrapping some stuff up," Jungkook texted back.

His phone buzzed a moment later with a reply. "Get some sleep. We have a big day tomorrow."

Jungkook's smile softened at his hyung's concern. Namjoon was always looking out for him, always making sure he wasn't overworking himself. So Jungkook texted back that he'd call it a night, then reached out and turned off his monitor, standing from his chair. He stretched, back stiff and aching, and straightened his tie, pulling on his suit coat.

He packed up his things into his briefcase, grabbed his long-cooled coffee, and took one last look around his office before stepping out into the hall. To find puddle of something dark at his feet.

Jungkook's brows creased, trying to see what exactly it was in the darkness of the hallway. There were drips and drops of the substance dotted here and there along the hallway, and Jungkook followed it, curious as to what it might be.

He followed a trail, not seeing the broken pictures and tipped furniture along the way, the hallway too dark. And the trail lead him right to his personal office, the one he wasn't in too often, preferring the office he shared with Namjoon.

He got to the door of his personal office, pulling out his keycard to open it… but it was already cracked open. Which was weird, because he was the only one who had access to the room. The only one with a keycard to get in… well, besides Namjoon.

His heart spiked a little, pumping harder in his chest, and he edged the door open a little bit more, cautiously peeking into the darkness. Heard a weird, wet, raspy sort of sound echoing faintly through the room.

Jungkook flicked on the lights, only to realize the room was a bloodbath. Everything knocked over and shattered. Crimson stripes painted on the walls in the shape of smeared handprints. And a body, lying in front of his desk.

He didn’t think twice before bolting to the person’s side, faintly recognizing it as his new assistant that’d been hired a few weeks before. He dropped to his knees, briefcase forgotten, blood soaking his suit. Her eyelids were swollen shut, blood oozing out of the back of her head, making the puddle around her larger.

She was breathing, but just barely.

With bloody hands, Jungkook pulled his phone out and called the cops.

He stayed with her for those ten terrifying minutes it took for emergency personnel to get to GCF and up the many stories to his office. He stayed with her the whole time, trembling and terrified. Couldn’t keep the blood from painting his hands, up his arms, sticky and drying.

The medics pushed Jungkook away as they rushed to get her strapped up and stabilized. Jungkook turned around, seeing all the broken things that littered the hallway, his own footprints painting blood down the hall, crimson smothering his hands. And he started heaving in the corner of the room, bile stinging his tongue.

Jungkook had gone into shock, is what the medics told him later. He had a blanket wrapped over his shoulders, medics shining a flashlight into his eyes, checking for something. Police grilled him on his story for over an hour, writing down every note, getting access to the security cameras.

They let him leave after a few hours of investigation, getting samples and taking pictures. He went home his lonely penthouse, covered in blood. Went home wishing he still lived with his hyungs so that they could comfort him.

He didn’t sleep that night.

He was arrested the next morning.

Chapter End Notes

first off, i want to address it right away and say i know what jk did is sick and wrong and stupid. i know. i wrote it like that. abuse is serious, and it's definitely not something anyone should take lightly. my best friend had a minwo in her life for 5 years, so i know just how fucked up it can be. i hope nobody is hurt by this chapter. i understand if anyone wants to bail out now.

shattered glass

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Monster by Imagine Dragons

Jungkook only made it two steps away from the house before the very essence of who he was stopped him in his tracks. His hands clenched into fists, his heart pounding like a war drum in his chest, his eyes shut tight. Because he couldn't fucking leave Jimin. He couldn't.

From the time Minwo had started beating on Jimin to Jungkook almost running away, it'd only been about twenty seconds. The camera was still rolling, and Minwo was still laying into Jimin, and Jungkook was still frozen with every fucking thing that'd ever conflicted him.

He wasn't a hero. He wasn't Anpanman, who saved the day constantly. He was Jeon Jungkook. But maybe that was enough.

He whipped around. Turned back to the faint sounds of agony rippling from the house. And even though the last time he'd helped someone like this he'd gotten arrested, even though he'd lost everything: his youth, his innocence, his company, he'd never been able to turn away from someone in need.

Look after Jimin for me, yeah? I know it's a lot to ask, but just… maybe just keep an eye on him for me?

And so he ran; he fucking ran.

He nearly slipped as he sprinted up the porch steps, ramming his shoulder into the front door, turning the knob. Minwo hadn't locked the door behind him; Jungkook should fucking know.

And there they were; Minwo had Jimin pinned up against the wall, hands wrapped around his throat, pressing and pressing. Jimin was choking and gasping and clawing at the monster's hands. But Minwo was too strong, and Jimin was already beaten, his eyes rolling back in his head as his body went limp.

But even after Jimin passed out, he was still choking him.

Minwo was going to kill Jimin.

A year ago, before the assistant's assault, he'd never gotten blood on his hands. Not like that. That had been a first for him. But now, now he'd been in countless fist fights; prison had been an enlightening experience in that regard. Now, he didn't think twice.

Jungkook hurled himself into Minwo as forcefully as he could, tackling the man away from Jimin. Both of them knocked into the hardwood floor and Minwo's eyes widened, wide as saucers as he took in the intruder. But the surprise didn't last long, not as Jungkook swung his fist down into Minwo's face.

Minwo only took two hits before he was fighting back. But Minwo was a strong man, and though Jungkook worked out regularly, it was obvious he was outmatched.

But he didn't fucking care.

Jungkook fought back with everything he had. His mind reeled with every broken memory that'd been cut up and shoved into his head over the past two years. Every fluttering, pink-lensed memory he had of Jimin. Every inky, black, cinders-and-ash memory of prison, of that damn courthouse.

Everything.

And he was the god of wrath. Angel of fury, of vengeance. He'd been beaten down too many times to count. But god, he'd always gotten back up. So he fought. He fought against a man twice as strong as he was. He fought for Jimin and Jihyun's promise, and he fought for himself.

Minwo was too strong, though. Too strong. Had Jungkook pinned down onto the kitchen table in no time, elbow digging sharply into the maknae's throat. And the air in his lungs, it was burning, potent, curling smoke.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" Minwo growled, letting his elbow up just enough for Jungkook to gasp in a breath of air before his oxygen was being cut off again. "Come to collect your fucking prize, huh?"

Jungkook hooked his leg around the back of Minwo's knee, twisting. Minwo's knee buckled, and they were both on the floor once more, Minwo pulling the maknae down with him. Jungkook scrambled to push himself up, take a defensive stance before Minwo had time to pin him again.

Blood was dripping into Jungkook's eyes, his hands and arms scratched and bleeding from the shattered glass on the ground. He swiped at his brow, clearing his vision of blood, paralleling Minwo as the other man stood, swaying a little. And Jungkook watched as Minwo's gaze flicked over to Jimin's unconscious body on the other side of the table.

"Don't you fucking touch him," Jungkook hissed, circling over, blocking Jimin from Minwo's path.

Minwo huffed out a bitter laugh. "You're one to talk. Like you did anything less to Jisoo."

Jungkook's hands clenched into fists, so hard they turned bloodless. "Don't you fucking go there."

Minwo's defensive posture eased a little. And then he was laughing, shaking his head, a mean little smirk twisting his features. "You're so fucking pathetic. Chasing after Jimin like a little dog for two fucking years. You think I didn't know about your little crush? You think I wasn't paying attention?"

Jungkook's lungs worked to pull in shuddering breath after breath. Stopped himself from charging again, knowing he wouldn't be able to put up another fight. Stall, he had to stall.

Minwo took a step forward, Jungkook taking a step back, almost stepping on Jimin's body.

God, was Jimin even alive?

"Don't come any closer."

"He's my fucking boyfriend," Minwo growled, arms bulging with muscle. "You shouldn't even be here. Do you know how much trouble I could get you in? I have a restraining order against you."

Jungkook didn't care.

Behind him, Jimin groaned, swelling eyes fluttering open.

Jimin groaned, eyes swelling shut, an agony running through his veins fast and hot and sharp. He couldn't move, couldn't move without pain splitting him apart at the seams. So he laid there on the cold floor, unwilling to budge.

Everything was fuzzy and hazy and blurred, out of focus and out of mind. His head was pounding with a raging headache, his fingers twitching into the shattered glass littering the floor. And he was content to just lay there, lay there and die.

He'd stood up to Minwo. He'd done it. And now he would have to deal with the consequences.

But something was wrong. He could hear voices, voices that were permeating the fog in his brain. Voices that were too familiar, too angry, too… too…

Jungkook.

Jungkook was here.

Jimin tried prying his eyes open the best he could, turned his battered face to where Jungkook stood in front of him, blocking Minwo from his sight. And Jungkook was bleeding, arms covered in cuts from what Jimin could see. And he hated it, hated that Jungkook was protecting him.

Jimin was meant to deal with this. Nobody else. This wasn't supposed to be anybody's problem but his own, and to see Jungkook get hurt because of him…

"Stop," Jimin choked out, struggling to find the strength to push himself up.

Jungkook's head whipped to the side, eyes trained on Jimin. And the maknae, Jimin saw the cut in his lip, the blood pouring from his forehead, bangs damp with crimson. The overwhelming worry, the panic, the concern.

Jungkook would fight Minwo off with everything he had, and Jimin couldn't allow that to happen.

"You need to leave, Jungkook," Jimin gritted out, trying desperately to push himself to sit up. But the world around him was fuzzing in and out of reality, black spots blooming in his vision like watercolor on a canvas.

"I won't let him hurt you anymore," Jungkook was saying, Minwo already taking a few steps closer while the maknae was distracted.

"No," Jimin snapped. "No. You… you need to fucking… leave…" Purple slammed through Jimin's eyes, his vision going dark for a second as his shaking arms gave out, his head smacking back into the floor.

He felt hands, hands on him, gentle and scared. But Jimin was already shoving Jungkook away, blinking past the urge to pass out. And Minwo was another step closer, another step, another.

"Get the fuck out," Jimin rasped. "Leave me the fuck alone."

He didn't mean to sound so angry, but Jungkook needed to leave. He shouldn't even be here. If the cops were called, Jungkook would be arrested along with Minwo. And as much as he hated what Minwo did to him, he didn't want either of them arrested because of him.

"Jimin, you're hurt," Jungkook pleaded, hand again on Jimin's shoulder, steadying him.

“No,” Jimin jerked away from the maknae’s touch. “I don’t want your fucking help. Get the fuck out.”

Jungkook’s resolve seemed to crack a little, and Jimin could see it in his eyes. The maknae would only leave if Jimin made him. There were no hits he’d take from Minwo that would drive him off. And Minwo, he was now standing there with a soft smirk on his face, staring at Jimin.

Minwo was Jimin’s boyfriend. And as much as he hated the man right now, Jimin had to take Minwo’s side before anyone else’s. Jungkook had to leave.

“Leave right now, Jungkook,” Jimin whispered, voice raw and throaty. “Don’t come back.”

Confusion and uncertainty were slathered into the lines of Jungkook’s face. He was hesitating, still kneeling on the broken glass, hands hovering over Jimin’s broken body.

“I don’t need your help,” Jimin continued, anger rising through him. Not anger at Jungkook, but he was directing it at the maknae, sharpening it like a dagger.

But still, the maknae didn’t move. Was frozen with a conflicted disorientation that made Jimin realize simply telling Jungkook to leave wasn’t going to get him anywhere. So he pulled out that night in the courthouse from the depths of his head; the night it’d all gone wrong. And he used it to drive the final nail in his coffin.

“That night in the courthouse, I meant what I said. You deserve it. You deserve everything you’ve gotten and more.”

Jimin swallowed at the lump in his throat as he saw anguish pang through Jungkook’s face.

“I used you then and I’ve used you every time I’ve seen you since.”

Jungkook flinched away, doe eyes wide with the suffering he’d been shoved into the last year.

“I don’t need you. I never needed you.

Jungkook stood quickly, looking between Jimin and Minwo, eyes wavering and unfocused and lost. And Jimin knew, knew exactly what he’d just done. But if it saved Jungkook from this situation, from being arrested again, then Jimin would do it ten times over.

“I never even cared. I didn’t then and I don’t now.”

Jungkook stumbled back a few steps, looking like Jimin had just shoved a knife into his gut.

Minwo was smiling.

And still, Jungkook hesitated a step or two, and Jimin was staring up at him through his quickly bloating, bruised eyes. And he wanted so badly to stop himself, to pull Jungkook close as he should’ve done that night in the courthouse. To apologize for every foul word he’d spat at the hurting youth.

But things had never been that simple. And Jimin did what he would’ve done only for Jihyun. He did it for Jungkook.

“I hate you.”

Jungkook finally seemed to get it. Seemed to understand that he wasn’t wanted or needed in the situation. And so Jimin watched, watched as shame crashed down over Jungkook’s face. Watched

as the world was shredded between the two of them.

And Jungkook left.

Jimin only had time to feel a dash of relief before his head was dipping back, his eyes falling closed as exhaustion gripped him, the woozy feeling in his head claiming him, taking him over.

Jimin's world went black once more.

Mood: idontwannabeyouanymore by Billie Eilish

Jimin moaned out Minwo's name as his boyfriend pounded into him, gripping his hips so tightly they were sure to bruise. But Jimin had lived a life of bruises. These ones he could handle.

Minwo pressed down on Jimin's back, grabbing his mop of black hair with his other hand, yanking hard. Pain shot through Jimin's scalp and he moaned.

"Fucking little slut, you like that, huh?" Minwo grunted. Jimin shuddered as Minwo started going harder, faster. "You like that, Min-ah? You like it when I treat you like the whore you are?" Minwo smacked Jimin's ass hard. So hard Jimin yelped.

He'd never been one for rough sex; he craved sweet words and loving whispers and soft touches. But nobody had ever looked at him the way Minwo did, and he loved Minwo enough to get used to it. Though sometimes he would remember the things Minwo called him, words that stuck to his ribs between promises and pleasure.

"Come on, Min-ah. Tell me you fucking like it you little fucking slut."

Jimin closed his eyes, fighting off the burning tears as his orgasm started to near, as Minwo went even rougher. "I like… oh, god…"

Minwo slapped his ass again, giving his hair another harsh tug. "Fucking say it, little whore."

"I like it, I like it-- ah!"

Minwo flipped Jimin onto his back, shoving him down into the mattress. He thrusted back in, leaning forward and wrapping his hands around Jimin's throat. Pressed down, cutting off Jimin's air, making the younger choke as he grabbed at Minwo's hands desperately.

Jimin hated being choked. It brought him back to his parent's house, to his father slamming him against the wall. Jihyun whimpering in the corner. His mother sobbing pathetically, deliriously, on the kitchen floor. Hands, rough and meaty, wrapping around his neck--

"Min-ah, stop fucking crying," Minwo hissed, tightening his grip even more.

"Stop-- stop!" Jimin choked out, clawing at Minwo's fingers, trying to pry them away.

Jihyun and kitchens and glass bottles breaking-

Minwo only pressed tighter. "You fucking like it, you little bitch. You fucking love it, don't you?"

Jimin couldn't breathe couldn't breathe, air air air--

he needed air air air

Needed to breathe breathe breathe

Couldn't.

Pressure and aching lungs and stars in his eyes-

Darkness.

Jimin woke up slowly, eyes and head pounding. His limbs were stiff, refusing to move, and he was hurting everywhere. He groaned softly, head lolling to the side as he searched for Minwo. His boyfriend wasn't in the room, though, and he gradually realized the shower was running.

Jimin was naked still, lying on top of the sheets, cold and shivering. There was dried cum all over his stomach and chest, and when he turned his head, he felt the bruises on his throat. He rubbed at them, hissing a little at the pain.

He laid there until the shower stopped, until he could only hear the whirring of the fan. Watched the golden rod of light at the bottom of the door, watching the shadow of footsteps inside. And he felt something queasy and oily and wretched in his chest, felt something akin to shame.

The bathroom door finally opened, the dark bedroom flooding with light as Minwo stepped into the room, fully clothed and washed up. He ran his hands through his wet hair, the smell of shampoo hitting Jimin, making him nauseous. It was strange, since Minwo'd taken a shower just before they'd hooked up.

"Oh, good. You're finally awake," Minwo commented nonchalantly as he made his way over to Jimin, sitting on the bed.

Jimin groaned a little at the dip in the bed, the way it moved his body the tiniest bit. Everything hurt too much for him to even think about wanting to get up, his head raging with a furious headache, pulsing and pounding.

"You scared me, Min-ah," Minwo murmured, running a hand through Jimin's hair.

Jimin blinked up at his boyfriend with bleary eyes, trying to get the fuzziness in his vision to go away, the ringing in his ears. "How long was I out?"

"Not long at all."

Jimin shook his head, groaning. The way he was feeling… it almost felt like something else was in his system, something off. "I told you I don't like being choked," he rasped.

Minwo scoffed, shaking his head. "I can't do anything right, can I?"

Jimin carefully pushed Minwo's hand away before finally mustering the strength to push himself to sit up, arms weak and wobbly. "It's not that, Minwo-ssi… I don't…"

Minwo patted Jimin's shoulder. "Does it make you think of your parents?"

Jimin nodded.

“You need to get over that.”

Jimin flinched, looking down at the dirty sheets. He knew he should be past it already, what had happened… but it was hard. He tried so damn hard to forget about it, but some things he couldn’t seem to control. “I’m sorry.”

“I forgive you, Min-ah. Maybe we’ll have to try choking more often to see if it might snap you out of it.”

Frosty dread curled through the pit of Jimin’s stomach at the thought of more choking, but he nodded anyways. Minwo was probably right. Minwo was always right.

“Oh, and are you actually going to go through with it this time?” Minwo asked.

Jimin finally looked up. Studied Minwo’s intensely dark and expecting gaze. Noticed a little cut on his forehead that hadn’t been there before, a few scratches on his neck… probably from Jimin himself. “I said I would.”

Minwo smiled lightly, leaning forward and planting a chaste kiss on Jimin’s lips. “It’ll be so good, Min-ah. I’ll treat you so good. You won’t have to worry about anything.”

Jimin’s eyes fluttered closed at the small kiss, and he desperately wanted to hold onto the love he was feeling right now. Grasping at shambles of it with broken fingers and a trembling heart. But this love was shattered glass, cutting up his hands.

“You don’t need Hoseok,” Minwo whispered against Jimin’s lips. “I’m proud of you for leaving.”

Jimin pulled away, that oily feeling coating his heart. Minwo had suggested it for weeks, and yet it had never gotten any easier for Jimin. He was just as hesitant as the first time Minwo had asked him. But for some reason Minwo had been pushing him to move in even more the past few days, to stay.

“Why?” Is what Jimin asked, had asked every single time.

Minwo sighed, getting a little impatient. “You know why. He’ll get between us. Don’t you want to be with me?”

“Of course… but I love him, Minwo. He’s a good guy and-”

~~*He’s my older brother.*~~

“Jimin-ah,” Minwo said, cutting Jimin off. “I know he’s a friend of yours, but you need to move on. You’ve been caught up with him for how many years? He’s holding you back.”

That’s what Minwo had said about Hope on the Street *and Tony and his university, too. That’s what Minwo had said about all of Jimin’s other friends and even his parents, who he’d been going to visit every weekend to bring them food at the homeless shelter. That’s what Minwo had said about everyone in Jimin’s life.*

~~*That’s what he’d said about Jungkook.*~~

“Okay,” Jimin mumbled, his heart aching now. “I’ll stay. I won’t go back.”

“Good boy,” Minwo praised, leaning forward and pressing a kiss to Jimin’s forehead. And Jimin thought he saw Minwo had darkened knuckles. “Now go wash up and get some pants on.”

Jimin didn't say anything as Minwo left.

Didn't say anything as he glanced at the alarm clock on the bedside table and saw that he'd been unconscious for four hours.

Mood: Never Enough (Reprise) by Loren Allred

Jungkook was fracturing.

Pacing, pacing, pacing.

Back and forth, back and forth.

Couldn't

Couldn't stop

Stop walking and walking and walking.

His body, his entire body was glazed with words. Jimin's words. Because Jimin had always known, always fucking known, how to break him apart.

And he was shaking.

Shaking and shaking as tears soaked his cheeks, as he was thrown into the whirlwind of *monster, monster, monster.*

His camera, his fucking camera, he threw it into the asphalt, smashing it. Didn't care how treasured it had once been to him. There'd been many things he'd treasured and lost over the last year.

He'd filmed it.

For twenty fucking seconds.

He'd filmed Jimin and sat there frozen. Hadn't been able to get out of his headspace, hadn't been able to breathe or move or see past the iron bars and white-washed walls in his head.

You deserved it.

Bars and fists and the shower pattering against the blood on his skin. The prison guards shoving their way through, tackling the inmates. Prying them off Jungkook's naked, battered body.

You deserve everything you've gotten and more.

Jungkook's knees slammed into asphalt, pebbles stabbing into his kneecaps through his ripped jeans. But he didn't care. Didn't care, didn't care, didn't care.

I used you then and I've used you every time I've seen you since.

"We need medical in D3. We need medical. Get me medical."

Inmates shouting in the background, the officers still securing the scene. Everyone was

excited in the prison, had been waiting for it. Jungkook's case was all over the news, and they'd been prowling around for the right time for days.

Jungkook felt nothing but pain. Pain as he shivered, curling into himself, away from the guard.

Jungkook couldn't breathe, couldn't breathe, couldn't breathe. Couldn't stop thinking about Jimin, Jimin, Jimin. Was still worried about him, even though Jimin had broken him apart time and time again.

He was worried.

But he couldn't go back, not when Jimin himself had told him to leave.

"He's going to have to go to the hospital. He's in bad shape."

"He deserves it," the ring leader of the fight shouted from where he was pinned to the ground by three prison guards. "Little fucking bitch deserves it."

Deserves it.

Jungkook deserved this pain.

I never even cared. I didn't then and I don't now.

He couldn't believe that. As hard as he tried, he couldn't completely believe Jimin's words. He never really had, just like he'd never really hated Jimin. And especially during these last two months, he'd gotten to know Jimin better than he'd ever known him. And Jimin, the real Jimin, wouldn't push him away like that if there wasn't a reason for it.

Right?

I hate you.

Jungkook pressed the heels of his palms into his eyes, not caring anymore that he was dripping blood everywhere, that it was scabbing on his forehead, would most likely give him a scar. He didn't care at all.

So he knelt there, knelt blocks away from Minwo's house in an empty, dead-end street where no one could see him.

And he drowned in *monster, monster, monster.*

Chapter End Notes

> thanks for hanging in there and for giving me so much support. i know jungkook fucked up and a lot of you really hate him right now... i'm sorry for not portraying his character very well. idk i guess i just feel really bad? i hope none of you hate jk in real life. he is actually a really sweet baby bun that deserves all the love in the world... please don't give up on my story.
> and i know the writing is a little confusing... i'm trying to show how screwed around

jk's thoughts are. cause when you have a panic attack everything is messy and jumbled up and thrown together. at least for me, you can't carry through a solid train of thought. especially when you have traumatic experiences, they just sorta let themselves in to trample you.

a fool, a fool, a fool

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had been six months since Jimin had moved in with Minwo. The days were too long, the months too short. Flew by as Jimin blinked.

He'd started working out for Minwo, had already lost more than ten pounds. He always felt so tired, working out so often and eating so little. But if it was for Minwo, he would do it. Which was why he was currently waiting outside the conference room at GCF in the upper levels of the building. Waiting for Minwo to get done, because for some reason he'd allowed Jimin to tag along for once.

So Jimin was sitting in a waiting area, offices stretching this way and that down the halls, frosted glass separating them. Dozens of beautiful, brilliantly shot pictures lined the corridors everywhere in the building, giving Jimin something to do while he waited. He stopped and stared at each and every one of them, admiring the carefully angled photos.

They were all credited to Jeon Jungkook, and Jimin couldn't stop thinking about the young CEO. Couldn't stop thinking about that day nearly a year previous where Jungkook had sat down across from him, talked to him, gotten him water.

Deep down, Jimin couldn't figure out how Jungkook matched up to the crime he was the prime suspect of. He couldn't see Jungkook with his big, innocent doe eyes beating someone into a coma. He just couldn't see it.

But he hadn't seen Minwo's dark side either.

Jimin played with his little black flip phone, opening and closing it absentmindedly as he paced through the halls, going from one picture to another. The phone was new. Just the previous week he'd had a smartphone, but his boyfriend had suggested it was better Jimin have the flip phone, with only Minwo in his contacts.

Jimin supposed love was sacrifice. He just wondered sometimes why the sacrifices in his relationship seemed so one-sided.

"Jimin?"

Jimin turned around faster than he thought possible, whipping his head in the direction of the person that had called his name. Because nobody in this building was supposed to know who he was. Nobody. Minwo would be fucking pissed if he thought Jimin was talking to someone at GCF.

But as soon as Jimin's eyes landed on the slightly taller young man, his heart dropped, beating low and fast in his chest. "Jungkook?"

The young CEO was wearing a suit and tie, his hair styled down, bangs hanging low over his eyes. Eyes that looked tired and sad and hurt. His hands were shoved in his pockets, shoulders slumped, defeated.

"I thought it was you; you dyed your hair again."

Jimin touched a hand to his throat, nervously eyeing Jungkook. He ran his other hand through his

now silver hair, scratching the back of his neck. "Yeah… are you waiting for the meeting?" Jimin asked.

Jungkook nodded, lips pressed into a thin line as his gaze fell to the floor. "Something like that."

It was awkward, to say the least. They hadn't been able to talk alone in months, not since Jimin had quit his job at the coffee shop. Not after everything went down with the assistant. And moving in with Minwo, Jimin had rarely, if ever, been at GCF in the last few months. Jungkook hadn't been there too much, either.

It had been a while.

Jungkook was still as handsome as ever.

"What're you doing here so late?" Jungkook asked, plopping down in a chair, scrubbing a hand over his face.

Jimin shrugged, nervously fidgeting with his little flip phone. "I'm waiting for someone."

Jungkook nodded, mind seemingly elsewhere. And Jimin couldn't help but study him some more. The shadows, the exhaustion radiating from him, it made it impossible to look past what must've been months of sleepless nights and bad press and meetings deciding the future of a company he had created.

Jimin knew he shouldn't be talking to Jungkook, not at all. But Jimin had never really listened to his head, and right now his heart was telling him this was someone who was hurting. Someone who just needed to talk. So Jimin walked over, sitting on a chair next to the young CEO. Jungkook seemed a little surprised by the action, as if no one had willingly talked to him in months.

"We haven't talked in a while," Jimin started carefully.

Jungkook stared at him. Shook his head. "Not really."

Jimin nodded to himself, cringing hard internally at the awkwardness of everything. He thought of what to say, anything he could say, so he looked around the room, eyes landing on a big picture hanging in the middle of a wall.

The atmosphere of the picture was warm and golden, dark and soothing. It was a guy on his phone, looking up with his fingertips delicately caressing his jaw, sitting on a black bench in some sort of event tent. He was wearing glasses and a beret, white shirt and black pants, and the light of his phone was casting white-blue up into his strikingly handsome face.



Jimin could tell it was someone close to Jungkook by the way they weren't really looking at the camera, more looking at the person taking the photo. "Who's that?"

Jungkook's gaze focused on the picture Jimin was pointing to, some of the darkness around him edging away as he looked at it. A small smile broke through, a little light in his eyes as he loosed a breath. "That's my best friend, Taehyung. I've known him since I was fifteen."

Jimin nodded. "What's the story behind it?"

Jungkook's gaze stayed locked on the picture of his friend, and Jimin could tell he was thinking back to better times, a sort of glow lighting his face. "I went on a business trip to Malta and brought him along with me. That picture is from an event we went to, but I was just glad to have him there with me. I'm a little shy with new people, and he's always been one to make friends easily."

Jimin's eyes glided over to another wall, a picture of the same guy, but standing on a dock. The same filtered yellow light illuminated the young man, the rest of his surroundings dark with night. Boats and city lights glittered behind him, and it was almost like the guy himself was what made the world good and worth living in.



Jimin couldn't help the tiny, genuine smile tugging at his lips now. "I can tell from the pictures that he's really important to you."

Jungkook nodded slowly, thoughtfully. "He appreciates the little things in life, and always makes me think about the beauty in the seemingly mundane."

"What about that one?" Jimin asked, motioning to another picture hanging a little farther down the hall.

Jimin didn't know how much time passed, but they ended up walking down a series of various halls, looking at picture after picture. Jimin saw the same guy from the first two littered through a couple more, and couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to be able to take pictures like this. Not only capturing a moment, but also an entire aura, an entire feeling and emotion.

They talked here and there, mostly Jungkook explaining his pictures and Jimin smiling and nodding and asking about the next one. By the time they were at the very end of one of the halls, Jimin's phone pinged with a text from Minwo, a text asking where Jimin was, saying that the meeting was over.

Jimin reluctantly looked up from his phone at Jungkook. "I've got to go. The meeting is over upstairs."

Jungkook nodded, shoving his hands back in his pockets. He didn't look quite so hurt and sad anymore, his shoulders not as droopy. Seemed a little disappointed to have Jimin leave so soon. But Minwo wasn't a patient person, and Jimin wasn't willing to keep him waiting.

"Wait, Jimin…" Jungkook looked down at his feet, shyly shifting from one foot to the other, rubbing the back of his neck. "Could I… I mean, you don't have to. I know I'm not the best person

to be around right now… but could I get your number?"

Jimin's heart spiked in his chest, his nerves tingling. He knew Minwo wouldn't like it if Jungkook started texting him, started calling and asking around. Especially with everything that had happened with the assistant. But something in Jimin's chest still refused to believe Jungkook was capable of something like that.

"How about I get your *number?" Jimin asked.*

Jungkook seemed to breathe a sigh of relief at that. "I can put it in your phone."

Jimin shook his head, knowing Minwo would throw a fit if he saw Jungkook's name in his contacts. "My phone's a little weird… it takes a few minutes to put contacts in. How about you write it down?"

Jungkook nodded eagerly, patting his pockets, pulling out a pen. He shuffled through his jacket pocket, pulling out a crumpled piece of paper, looking a little embarrassed as he realized that's all he had. So he ripped a corner off, stuffing the rest of the paper in his pocket.

Jungkook wrote his number down and Jimin smiled, taking it, hiding it away in his jacket. They parted with an awkward goodbye, Jimin throwing one last look at the young, hurting CEO behind him before disappearing up the stairs, making his way to the conference room to meet Minwo.

Jungkook had been pacing through his bedroom all night, unable to go to sleep. He kept seeing Jimin's crumpling form in the back of his mind, kept seeing the way Minwo had stood lightning fast from his seat, slamming his hands down at something Jimin had said. And that plate. He'd thrown a fucking *plate* at Jimin's face, cracked right against his skull.

Jungkook ran his hands through his hair over and over again, glad his hyungs were either at work or asleep. He couldn't let them know what he'd done. Couldn't let them see how wrecked he was by what he'd seen. Because he *knew* Jimin.

It'd been easier when Jimin had simply been "Minwo's secret lover" and nothing more, when that'd been what Jungkook had reduced him to after the courthouse incident. It had been easier to hate him, then.

But Jimin… Jimin baked cookies and danced and had a younger brother he absolutely adored and would do anything for. Jimin had been Hoseok's best friend, pretty much a brother, and had helped make *Hope on the Street* from what Hoseok had told him. Jimin had the prettiest laugh Jungkook had ever heard and a glowing eye smile that made literally everyone around him melt and a beautiful heart filled to the brim with kindness.

Jimin had started to become an actual… an actual person in Jungkook's life. He sort of had been before the whole mess in the courthouse, but not really. It had been a silly crush, and they'd never gotten to know each other, not like this.

He'd promised Jihyun to look out for Jimin.

And it was like finding the assistant all over again. Except this time, he felt like the blood really was on his hands. Like he was the one that had tackled Jimin to the floor, slamming his fist into him over and over again. The blood was on his hands, the screams in his ears.

Jungkook had watched. Hadn't done anything to stop it for twenty fucking seconds. Had filmed it.

His broken camera sat peacefully on his bed, the witness of violence. And Jungkook had really, actually *filmed* something like that. Had gotten a clear shot through the open back kitchen window, the one Jimin had looked out of that day more than a month ago, a caged bird.

He felt disgusting. But he couldn't go back. He couldn't, not if Minwo was there. Not when Jimin didn't even need him.

And so he paced and paced, dark circles printed into the skin beneath his eyes, a path worn into his rug by now. Couldn't sleep, couldn't even think about eating. Couldn't do anything but think, think about Jimin and the assistant and Minwo and-

"Jungkook."

Jungkook paused mid-step, head whipping over to the person standing in his doorway. It was Jin, his eldest-hyung, holding a cup of ramen and a pair of chopsticks.

Jin was blinking weird, like he did when he got upset or distracted. And it wasn't very hard to guess why, seeing as Jin had been the one to find him, bring him home. Had put his shattered pieces back together for the time being, calming him down and talking him through it.

"I made some ramen," Jin said gently, stepping into Jungkook's room. His eyes flitted to the beat up camera on the bed, something sad in his gaze.

Jungkook took the ramen from his hyung, not hungry at all. He didn't like eating late, found it gave him heartburn the next morning, made him feel bloated and awful. But he poked at the noodles with the chopsticks, wandering over to his bed, sitting down as he swirled the broth, considering taking a bite.

Jin shifted from one foot to the other, glancing around the room, fiddling with his hands. He'd always been a goofy hyung, always been loose and light and happy, tried to stay positive. So Jungkook knew Jin was a little out of his element, trying to comfort him.

"Jungkook-ah… do you want to talk about it?"

Jungkook sipped at the broth, feeling the savory warmth wash down his throat. But his stomach, it was still reeling from the sight of Jimin's hard eyes and cruel words, from Minwo's smile and the shattered glass littering the floor.

Jungkook shook his head, staring down at the ramen.

Jin hesitated, shifting from one foot to the other, back again. Awkwardly shuffled forward, placing his hand on Jungkook's shoulder. Looked like he was fishing for words, for anything he could say.

"It's okay, hyung," Jungkook murmured. "I'm okay."

Jin nodded, small frown painting his handsome features. "I just… I'm worried, you know? You went months without… without the panic attacks… and I guess I'm just… worried."

Jungkook ran the pad of his fingers around the edge of the ramen cup. "I, uh… it'll be okay."

Jin's hand still lingered on Jungkook's shoulder, warm through Jungkook's thin jacket. "This is… awkward, I guess. I'm not good at this stuff… but… I love you, you know? I love you… and it, uh, it just worries me. I just don't want to see you as hurt as you were… after prison… I don't want to

see you go back to that."

Jungkook would've cringed any other time, would've punched Jin's shoulder from the cheesiness of saying 'I love you.' It wasn't that they didn't say it, it was that they said it in their actions, in the way they lived together and treated each other, the way they relied on one another. It went without saying, especially living with hyungs that weren't very adept at… emotions.

"Thank you, hyung," Jungkook whispered, voice small and raw and barely there. He was exhausted. Exhausted, stuck between flashes of memories he was never supposed to have in the first place. But he was grateful. Grateful for Jin, who was always there when he most needed him.

Jin lingered for another moment before he left, retreating into the hall and softly closing the door behind him.

Tears slid down Jungkook's face as soon as Jin was gone. He wiped at them with the back of his sleeve, sniffling a little, tired of crying.

He ate his ramen.

Jimin moaned a little, everything aching, the blinding white light of the exercise room blanketing him uncomfortably.

He knew Minwo must've dragged him downstairs, dumping him in there to deal with later. Later, when Jimin was more awake. Which meant Jimin was going to be punished more… and when Minwo punished him, he always dragged it on for as long as he could.

The last time Jimin had been punished, he'd been handcuffed to the bed for three days straight while Minwo was away on a business trip… eventually pissing himself and rubbing his wrists raw and bleeding trying to get out of the cuffs.

This time would be much, much worse than last time.

Jimin tried opening his eyes, barely squinting up at the bright light above him. He thought about Jihyun, wishing his brother was there with him. When they'd still lived with their real parents, when there were times like these with Jimin beaten and bruised, Jihyun would always curl up at his side, head resting above his heart.

They'd survived together. It was hard to survive alone. Getting harder to convince himself he needed to survive.

Jimin tried to sleep, but his body was in too much pain to do so. So he laid there awake on the cold cement floor, bathed in milky light, absently dreaming of snowstorms and cookies.

He failed to hear the front door opening upstairs. Failed to hear the footsteps on the staircase leading down to the basement, closer to where Jimin laid. Only noticed when there was a shadow cast over his face, when gentle hands were helping him sit up. But his eyes were too swollen to properly open, vision too blurred to see.

He felt the hands wrap carefully around his wrists, prompting him to stand up. And *god,* did Jimin try to stand. But his bruised up shins trembled with agony as soon as he put pressure on them, making him buckle forward. The person caught him, guiding him a few steps.

Then there was something in front of Jimin. Not a doorway, as he'd been expecting, but the punching bag. The person placed Jimin's hands on the bag, then let go for a bit before their touch

returned, something metal touching Jimin’s wrists.

And Jimin knew what it was. Minwo had used handcuffs on him many times, and each time Jimin’d had a panic attack, thinking back to his childhood. But he’d learned to hold it in the last few times, especially since the last time he’d been punished.

And for a second, Jimin had thought he’d been saved. Foolishly thought his words hadn’t worked, that Jungkook had come back to rescue him. But he knew what he’d done. Knew what pins he’d pulled, what bridges he’d burned.

And he was sorry.

Couldn’t stop seeing Jungkook’s shattered expression. Couldn’t stop, couldn’t stop. But Jungkook was better off far away from Jimin, and it was Jimin’s own damn fault he was in this mess in the first place.

Jungkook didn’t deserve this.

And as Minwo left the room without another word, the bright lights still blasting through Jimin’s head, handcuffed to a punching bag, Jimin wondered.

Wondered how he’d ended up here, in the basement of such a cruel monster. Wondered how he’d willingly walked into this, giving himself over to the same thing he’d grown up watching. Wondered and wondered and wondered, but could only come to a single conclusion.

He was a fool.

Chapter End Notes

thank you all for such sweet comments. you guys are seriously awesome. i hope you liked this chapter and i really love reading your thoughts and predictions.
a few things though... i've seen a few comments i've had to remove because they were nasty and negative and such, saying i'm disgusting and that this story is toxic and damaging to the bts community... i'll take those down. i won't even respond, i'll just delete them, and i did. if this story isn't your cup of tea, then fucking move on. :)
thank u, next.

i run, run, run

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Bored by Billie Eilish

Jimin groaned, shifting against the punching bag. The chilly basement air clung to his bare torso, making him shiver uncomfortably. Grasped for any semblance of warmth.

He had been handcuffed to the punching bag for almost two weeks now, Minwo barely coming down long enough to unchain him to use the bathroom or eat. Jimin would plead each time, trying to get Minwo to see reason.

But Minwo didn't say anything: jaw set stubbornly, eyes dark and hard and unforgiving. He'd shove Jimin back against the punching bag, which hung from the ceiling on a thick chain, and lock him back up, leaving without a word.

Jimin couldn't lie down. He couldn't sleep. He couldn't stretch or move well, the punching bag hanging just high enough to keep Jimin on his tiptoes. But at least he could see again, his black eyes mostly healed. At least the bruises were fading.

The lights were always on, too. It hadn't bothered Jimin at first, but he'd never realized how much he missed the darkness of a good night's sleep. Jimin had asked Minwo once to at least turn the lights off, and Minwo had kept them off for five days, Jimin losing all sense of time and day. The only way he could tell the days apart was Minwo's schedule, and even then he wasn't sure how accurate it was.

Jimin's forehead rested against the cool material of the punching bag, arms stretched and locked around it. He thumped his head lightly against it over and over until there was a dull ache touching the back of his skull.

"Don't do that, Min-ah," Jimin heard from behind him.

Jimin stiffened, head freezing. His hands clenched into fists, handcuffs pinching the skin of his wrists with the motion.

Minwo was behind him, then, chest touching his back. Smelled of alcohol. His fingertips lightly skimmed up and down Jimin's bare back, feathery and gentle. "You're too pretty to hurt yourself."

Jimin struggled against the cuffs, trying to turn his head so that he could see Minwo, look him in the eyes. "Let me go," he demanded, voice raw, low, raspy.

Minwo hooked his chin over Jimin's shoulder, pressing kisses into the crook of his neck, hands curling lightly into his sides. "You haven't learned."

Jimin thumped his forehead against the punching bag again, a little harder. "I wouldn't have gone to Jungkook's house if you hadn't kicked me out. I didn't want to die."

"Those are excuses."

"I came back to you. I came back to you every single time."

"You cheated on me, Min-ah," Minwo whispered, nose brushing down the curve of his neck. “I’m doing this because I love you. Because you belong to only me. You’re mine.”

Jimin knew there was no point in arguing anymore. He shook his head, legs trembling.

"Tell me you love me," Minwo prompted, teeth grazing Jimin's skin.

Jimin remained quiet.

Minwo's fingers dug painfully hard into the soft skin of Jimin's sides. "Tell me you love me."

Jimin didn't say anything.

Minwo sighed, pressing more tender kisses to his neck and shoulder before reaching up, unlocking the handcuffs. Jimin hugged the punching bag, head spinning as his aching feet touched the ground. He eased his full weight onto his feet little by little until he was standing, not looking at Minwo as his boyfriend bent down, picking up the food he'd brought.

It was a protein shake, and Jimin felt tears prick his eyes just looking at it. He hated protein shakes so much. So goddamn much. But he took it anyways. Minwo watched as Jimin drank the whole thing, stomach growling angrily. Took the empty bottle from him before grabbing Jimin's wrist. Jimin hissed at the pain, wrists rubbed raw; Minwo let go after a few seconds.

"Tell me you love me, Min-ah."

Jimin's gaze fell to the floor.

“Min-ah.”

Jimin shook his head.

Stinging pain sizzled through the side of Jimin's face, and he went sprawling backwards, head hitting the punching bag. He groaned at his aching muscles, head spinning with weakness, with the force of the slap.

"You're ungrateful," Minwo spat, surging forward and grabbing Jimin's forearms.

Jimin struggled against him, kicking at his legs. He'd dealt with cruelness his whole life, was used to it, knew how to fight it. It was just that… just that he was tired, now. He’d had more fire when he was younger, escaping home after home, family after family. Now he was tired of fighting.

"You're a monster," Jimin whispered, looking up into Minwo's black eyes.

Minwo picked him up by his forearms, slamming him back against the wall behind the punching bag. His knee eased between Jimin's legs, pressing up into his crotch hard enough for pain to start spiking through him.

"I gave you everything!" Minwo seethed, slamming Jimin's back against the wall again.

"No!" Jimin struggled. "No, you didn't! You took everything *from* me!"

Minwo's knee pressed harder, Jimin stifling a cry at the sharp sting coursing through his body, radiating from his sensitive parts. "You've been fucking him since that day in the lobby, haven't you?" Minwo accused.

"No!" Jimin cried. "I haven't!"

Minwo shook his head, strands of black hair falling down over his brows, eyes crazed. "Little fucking liar." He slammed his knee up into Jimin's groin, making Jimin squeal at the crashing wave of agonizing *pain pain pain-*

Each slam of Minwo's knee into his crotch brought a new wave of stabbing torture. Minwo did it at least four more times until Jimin was sobbing, tears soaking his cheeks, eyes shut hard. Squealing, squeaking, voice cracking.

"Little slut, huh?" Minwo hissed. He let Jimin's bruised forearms go, and Jimin was on the floor again, curled in a ball, wailing out the agony zinging through his body.

Minwo swung in a few more aimed kicks, circling through the room, furious as hell. All the while Jimin trembled and gasped out sobs at the pain. Flinched when Minwo approached him, reached down and grabbed Jimin up, forcing him back against the punching bag. Handcuffs locking around his wrists, straining his body again.

Minwo kicked at the back of Jimin's knee in one final fit of anger, causing Jimin's leg to buckle, his wrists taking the brunt of his weight. Jimin sobbed against the bag, his arms burning as he struggled to regain his stance.

The lights flicked off as Minwo left, leaving Jimin in darkness, feeling filthy and worthless and broken.

It would be another week until Minwo finally let him go, keeping him locked in the exercise room still, but without being handcuffed to the punching bag. And in that week, curled up in the dark behind the punching bag, a determination born of brokenness came over him.

He went back to the years he'd spent on the streets, running and hiding and fighting like a stray dog. The years before Hoseok's home, which had been full of warmth and love and safety. The years of darkness, time he'd shoved deep down within himself, vowing never to return to it again.

And it overwhelmed him. Reached up through his veins and crushed his heart between hands of hissing charcoal. Crushed him up, squeezing like a boa constrictor until it was gone. Until he was successfully broken, completely smothered.

And he knew it was time for him to go back to running. Running was the only thing he really knew how to do, after all. Was the only thing that worked.

So he would run.

He would run and run and run.

And this time, he wouldn't come back.

Jungkook stared at his phone, at the dozens of text messages from Hayoon and Namjoon, even a few from Jin, who was at work. They were worried about him, they kept saying. He was acting weird, had been for the last three weeks. Withdrawn, pale, haunted. Was acting exactly like he had after he'd found his assistant, after he'd been released from a week of being in jail. Carried from the prison cells on a stretcher.

Namjoon had even called Tae, asking if anything had happened at home. Jungkook had heard them talking on the phone late the other night. Mentioned something about going back to a therapist.

But Jungkook had been through therapy. Hadn’t exactly liked it too much, even though it had helped. The assistant, there was no erasing those memories from his head, only learning to cope with them. But right now it wasn’t the assistant that haunted him, but Jimin. He heard Jimin's screams, kept seeing the way that plate connected with his temple, making Jimin fly back. Saw it happen over and over again in his dreams.

He would be lying if he said he’d been sleeping well. If he said he hadn't been staring at Jimin's contact in his phone every single night, thumb hovering above the call button. He’d be lying if he said he hadn't driven past Minwo's house at least a dozen times, trying to catch any signs that Jimin was okay, that he was alive. But Minwo had been there every single time, red car in the driveway, curtains closed.

Jungkook couldn't stop thinking about Jimin. And neither could Jin or Yoongi or Tae or Hoseok, all of which kept asking. Especially Hoseok. The dancer had asked Jungkook more about Minwo, about what he knew of their relationship, and Jungkook had to keep swallowing the memories back down. Couldn’t bear to tell his hyung what he’d done.

Jungkook also stared at Jihyun's contact quite a bit, debating whether or not to call Jimin's younger brother. If he should tell Jihyun what had happened that night. But Jimin had told Jungkook to leave, said he didn’t need or want him there. And as much as he’d promised Jihyun that he’d look out for Jimin, he couldn’t bring himself to call the younger brother.

Jungkook was pacing back and forth in his room when the door suddenly opened, Tae slipping through. He looked tired and sweaty, probably just got back from dance practice from the looks of it. He walked over to Jungkook's bed, plopping down across it, tossing his dance bag on the floor.

It was a moment of silence, Tae lying there watching Jungkook. Spoke only after it was apparent Jungkook wasn’t going to speak at all."Still pacing?"

Jungkook didn't say anything.

"You're wearing a path into the carpet," Tae pointed out.

Jungkook didn't care.

"Yah, will you sit down for a minute? You're making me tired."

Jungkook stared at Tae as he paced, Jimin's crumpling body flashing through his head. But it was only a second before Tae stood up, taking the few steps it took to reach Jungkook, wrapping his arms around the maknae to stop him from pacing. Simply held Jungkook in place, arms loose around him.

"Are you okay?"

Jungkook braced his hands at Tae's waist, suddenly burying his face in his hyung's shoulder. If he looked into Tae’s eyes for too long, he’d start crying.

"I'm worried, Jungkook-ssi."

Jungkook shrugged his shoulders, the dark circles beneath his eyes growing just the tiniest bit heavier, making their presence known.

"Say something. You're worrying all of us."

Jungkook nuzzled his nose more into Tae's shirt, searching for the comforting scent that came with

his best friend.

"Jungkook?"

Jungkook sighed, holding Tae a little lighter. "I'm just tired."

Tae curled his fingers through Jungkook's dark hair, holding his head against his shoulder. "You've been saying that for almost three weeks now. What happened?"

Jungkook shook his head, forehead brushing back and forth on Tae's shoulder, bangs getting messed up. "Nothing. Nothing happened."

"You're not telling me the truth, Kook-ah," Tae complained. He pulled back, hands on Jungkook's shoulders, looking into his eyes. "You tell me everything. Why aren't you telling me?"

Jungkook loved Tae, had always felt the closest to him out of all his hyungs. Did actually tell him everything… except when it came to Jimin. For some reason, he'd never told Tae anything memorable when it came to Minwo's--

"Is it the assistant?" Tae asked carefully.

Jungkook leaned his forehead against Tae's shoulder again, too tired. "Something like that."

Tae rubbed a hand up and down Jungkook's back. "Why don't we go out and do something? You've been holed up in here for long enough. Yoongi-hyung was about to come kick your ass, but I told him I'd get you out instead."

Jungkook huffed out a flat laugh. "Hyung…"

"Come on. I'm worried about you, and you don't want to worry your hyung any more, right?"

Jungkook sighed, relenting.

Tae dragged him by the wrist out into the hallway, down the stairs, into the kitchen. Jin was gone to work, as was Yoongi now, so it was just him and Tae.

They were in the car before Jungkook knew it, driving to who knew where. Probably the park, if he knew Tae at all. But on their way to wherever they were going, Jungkook's phone started ringing.

He sighed, not really wanting to deal with it at the moment, so he nearly ignored it before he saw who was calling. And the blood in his veins plummeted, draining from his face, heart pounding in his ears.

Call from Park Jimin

Jungkook nearly dropped his phone as he slid the bar on the screen to answer it, pressing the phone to his ear so hard his piercings dug into his head. "Hello?"

It was quiet on the other line for a second before there was someone clearing their throat.
"Jungkook?"

"Jimin-hyung?" Jungkook asked, fingers digging hard into the phone. It was difficult, so difficult to act casual, to not start bombarding Jimin with questions about if he was okay.

"Uh… I was just… I don't know…" Jimin muttered on the other side. *"I know I told you… I told*

you to leave… that night… but I… I was just wondering if you were busy right now?"

"No," Jungkook assured too quickly. "Why?"

There was silence for a moment before Jimin responded . *"I don't know… Nevermind… I was just… just calling, I guess. I hope you're doing well… and I hope you have a good day…"*

"No, no, hyung," Jungkook panicked. "Wait, wait, wait. Me and Tae are out right now. Do you want to come with us? We could go for ice cream or something?"

Another long pause, Jimin humming low. *"I don't… are you sure? I don't want to bother-"*

"It won't be a bother at all. Tae misses you." Tae looked over at Jungkook with creased brows, confused and suspicious, before he turned his attention back to driving. "We're going to get ice cream."

"Ah… um… ice cream?"

"It doesn't have to be ice cream," Jungkook reasoned quickly. "We could… we could get water or-" Jungkook cringed at his words, resisting the urge to face-palm. "I mean, I know you don't like coffee."

"Ice cream sounds good… um… could you pick me up, though?"

Jungkook swallowed hard, "Of course. Is… is Minwo there right now?"

There was a sound on the other side, almost as if Jimin's breath had caught in his throat. *"No,"* Jimin said too quietly. *"Not right now...*

"We'll be there in a few minutes."

"Okay… I'll… I'll see you in a bit."

Jungkook waited until the call dropped to lower his phone. "We need to turn around."

Mood: Too Good At Goodbyes

Jimin lowered the phone from his ear, ending the call quickly. He set the little flip phone on the counter where he knew Minwo would see it, right next to a note saying goodbye.

He looked around the kitchen, taking one last good look at it. Because he was going to do what he knew how to do best.

He was going to run.

He'd managed to find an unused black backpack in the bottom of the front closet. Had stuffed it with the bare essentials and the few pictures he had of his parents and brother. Besides that, he didn't really have anything else to take with him. Only took the things he'd had before he'd moved in with Minwo a year previous. Didn't take a single thing Minwo had bought for him.

He felt a little bad using Jungkook as a means to get farther away from the house than he could by walking, had almost given up too quickly into the call. He had Hoseok's number in his pocket still, and had scrawled Jungkook and Jihyun's numbers right below it… just in case. But he knew

Jungkook was the only person he could call for this, the only person that wouldn't know what he was trying to do.

He'd ditch them at wherever they were going, ask to use the bathroom and then slip out the back. And then he'd walk. To where, he didn't know. He didn't really care. But he'd leave, leave and not be in pain anymore.

That's always how it went, right?

He took one last look at the hell surrounding him, fidgeting with the sleeves of his dark hoodie, pushing his thick, black-rimmed glasses up his nose. Minwo had never liked the glasses, had always insisted Jimin wear contacts.

He waited by the front window, watching for Jungkook's black car. Kept looking around the room, not really believing this would be the last time he saw it. But Yoongi's words kept flitting through his head, and he knew it was time to go.

Time to run.

He spotted the only picture of himself on the wall, the one Jungkook had stared at every time he'd been over. And despite himself, despite the limited space in his backpack, he walked over and unhooked the frame. Undid the back, grabbing the picture out, shoving it in his backpack with the other pictures he had of his family.

There was a knock on the door, then. It startled him so badly he dropped the frame in his hand, the echo of glass cracking shooting through Jimin's ears. He rushed over to the window, eyes landing on a car that wasn't Jungkook's. But he could just barely see Jungkook's form on the porch. So Jimin took a deep, shuddering breath.

Walked over to the door.

Opened it.

Jungkook's eyes widened, shocked as he looked at Jimin. Jimin knew he didn't exactly look too good right now, was wearing his glasses, bangs hanging low over his eyes, hood up. But it didn't warrant the look Jungkook was giving him, looking him over, studying every little detail.



“Hey, Jungkook,” Jimin muttered, not bothering to force a smile.

Jungkook visibly paled even more, and Jimin wondered if he really did look that awful. But there weren’t any bruises on his face… they’d all healed up. Maybe it was because of what Jimin had said. How suddenly Jimin had called him, offering no explanation or apology about his words that night.

But if Jungkook was here, he must’ve seen through it.

“Ice cream, yeah?” Jimin asked, breaking the awkward silence.

Jungkook blinked a few times, shifting nervously from foot to foot. His gaze flicked over Jimin’s shoulder, back to that wall with the pictures on it. But Jimin stepped out onto the porch, closing the door behind him before Jungkook could see the shattered, empty frame on the floor.

“Is that Taehyung?” Jimin asked.

Jungkook nodded numbly, still staring at Jimin.

Jimin adjusted the strap of his backpack on his shoulder, starting down the steps. Walked down the stairs he never should’ve climbed a year ago. Steps he’d climbed not knowing what hell they would lead to.

Jungkook was only a step behind Jimin, soon by his side as they walked down the driveway to the dark blue car. “I didn’t know you wore glasses.”

Jimin let a weak smile play at his lips. “They’re ugly, aren’t they?” His nose crinkled, glasses moving with it. “Usually I wear contacts.”

Jungkook was still staring at Jimin. “No, they look good. I’ve just never seen you wear them.”

And there was so much shit between them. So much history, so much damage. Confusion, they were both so confused. And Jimin knew Jungkook wanted to ask about that night, wanted answers. But it didn't matter anymore. None of it did.

So Jimin pushed past it, not giving Jungkook the opportunity to ask anything. "Does Jin-hyung wear contacts? He always blinks weird."

Jungkook nodded, expression hooded and hesitant. "Yeah, he does. He thinks glasses make him look like this one picture of him as a kid, and he's vowed never to let anyone see him in glasses ever."

Jimin snorted, opening the back driver's side door to the navy blue car, pulling himself up into the cool leather seat.

One step closer to getting away.

Minwo,

I'm leaving.

I won't tell you where I'm going, so don't try to look for me.

I need to be on my own, and I need to figure some stuff out.

I'm sorry.

-Jimin

Chapter End Notes

i love all of you <3
probably won't post a chapter this weeked (might on sunday or if i get really bored) cause i'm going to family christmas parties and such. anyways, have a good few days :)
(oh... and i've already started writing the next big story i'm gonna post after this one is finished. i know i already have one i need to finish lol but... yeah..)

stay

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Blue Side (Outro) by j-hope

Jungkook shifted in the booth of the ice cream parlor. It was on the clear other side of the city, had taken almost a half an hour to get there. But Jimin had insisted, shy and a little guilty about the distance, that it was the best ice cream in all of Seoul.

Jungkook continued to stare at Jimin, memories from the night he'd filmed three weeks ago flooding his head. Mixed with the assistant. Blood, so much blood and bruises and brokenness. So much pain.

And Jimin, he looked… he looked fine, if one was to merely look on the outside. But his eyes, dark and cool and brown, were dulled and cloudy. Where Jungkook had always seen some sort of hope or light in his eyes, however little, there was none now. And it scared Jungkook, that darkness.

Jimin was a very scary person when he was down.

It was like waking up without the sun in the sky: no gold, no warmth. Like spending your life reaching for the stars, but finding nothing to catch, nothing to grasp onto. It was like… it was like Jimin was numb. Numb and empty and hollow, filled with nothing but grey rain and bitter winds and pooled water reflecting off lonely pavement.

Quiet. Haunted. Withdrawn.

Jimin was currently licking at his ice cream, down to the rim of the cone. He looked lost, eyes unfocused, head somewhere else. Tae was talking about a new artist he'd found that he absolutely loved, and how he'd since started incorporating some of the artist's styles into his own art.

Jimin would nod his head, soul threadbare and worn out, even to Jungkook's eyes. But Jimin wasn't even trying to hide it now, not like he had been more than two months previous when Minwo had kicked him out.

"I'll be right back. I need to use the bathroom," Jimin said suddenly, eyes having snapped back with clarity.

Jungkook and Tae watched him grab his black backpack up from the floor, slinging it over his shoulder, heading towards the sign that pointed towards the back. He was gone soon enough.

"Is he okay?" Tae asked, looking over at Jungkook.

The maknae shrugged, screams littering his mind. "I don't know."

Tae hummed, digging his spoon into his cup of ice cream, shoving another spoonful of chocolate in his mouth. "I was talking to Hoseok-hyung the other day."

"Yeah?" Jungkook asked, thoughts faraway.

"Yeah," Tae said, swirling his melting ice cream around. "I asked him about Jimin. He would barely tell me anything, though."

Jungkook nodded.

“How long have you known Jimin, anyways?” Tae asked.

Jungkook shrugged, thinking back to that chilly afternoon two years ago. Dark red hair, white dress shirt and black tie, employee badge hanging around his neck with the ID turned so that he couldn’t read it. “Two years.”

“Oh.”

“What do you mean *‘oh?’”*

Tae licked at another spoon of ice cream. “You two just seemed like you had a lot of history. I guess I’m just surprised I’d never met him before January.”

Jungkook’s phone started ringing, cutting him off from any reply to Tae’s observation. He looked at the caller ID, confusion and something darker prickling along the back of his neck. Because it was Jimin calling, and wasn’t Jimin in the bathroom?

He frowned, accepting the call, pressing his phone to his ear. “Jimin-hyung?”

“Where is he.”

Jungkook’s heart slammed into overdrive, adrenaline shooting through his whole body, eyes widening. “Minwo?”

“Where the fuck is he?”

Minwo sounded absolutely furious. Jungkook glanced at the bathroom doors tucked into the back of the shop. “I don’t know-”

“Bull shit. He called this number last; it says on his phone. Where the fuck is he, Jungkook?”

Jungkook’s entire mind was locking up, remembering too many things at once. Overwhelmed and outmatched by the sheer rage rippling through the speaker.

“I don’t know-”

“Why was he calling you? What little fucking lies did you whisper in his ear? Where is he?”

Nausea crawled up the back of Jungkook’s throat. “I didn’t tell him anything-”

“Bull fucking shit. You fucking know. He left a fucking note saying he was leaving and I want to know where the fuck he is and what you fucking told him.”

“I didn’t tell him anything.”

“He called you.”

Jungkook sucked in a breath. “I don’t have to tell you anything.”

“He’s mine. He belongs to me. He wouldn’t have left me unless you convinced him to.”

“I didn’t tell him to do anything. If he left, that was his choice.”

“Couldn’t leave it at the assistant, huh? Had to ruin my life because I told the fucking truth?”

“I don’t know where he is, Minwo.”

“WHERE IS HE?”

“I don’t fucking know. Leave me alone and don’t fucking call me again.”

“I’m going to give you one last chance to tell me where Jimin is. I’ll fucking kill him and you if you don’t tell me-”

Jungkook hung up, blocking the number immediately, hands trembling so hard he almost dropped his phone. Already, he was getting alerts for blocked calls from Jimin’s little flip phone. Tae had a hand on his shoulder, was asking him what was wrong, who that was. Jungkook muttered Minwo’s name before a piece of the conversation edged into his mind, shattering his focus.

Jimin had left a note saying he was leaving. And Jimin still hadn’t come back from the bathrooms, had taken that black backpack with him.

“I’ll be right back,” Jungkook blurted, quickly sliding out from the booth, phone forgotten at the table. “Stay here.”

Tae was asking him what the hell was going on, but Jungkook was running to the back, towards the bathrooms. He swung open the bathroom door, and immediately noticed none of the stalls were closed.

The room was empty.

And Jimin was gone.

Jungkook panicked, thinking about what Hoseok would do or say if he found out what’d happened. That Jungkook had basically given Jimin a lift to disappear. That Jimin had left without saying goodbye again. It would break Hoseok even more. And Jungkook had made a promise, had promised Jihyun he’d look after Jimin.

A window was open, small and a little high up, but just big enough for a person to squeeze through. Big enough for Jimin to escape.

Jungkook didn’t think twice before scaling the bathroom wall, hands finding purchase on the window ledge, pulling himself up and through. Saw a flash of Jimin’s platinum blond hair and glasses. He jumped down from the window, out into a fenced off back alley.

Jimin was trying to scale the fence, already having seen Jungkook, climbing the chain link faster than the maknae thought possible. But Jungkook was faster, sprinting towards the fence and grabbing Jimin around the waist, carefully but firmly manhandling him down.

Jimin kicked and struggled, spitting out curses, bag dropped on the ground by their feet as Jungkook held Jimin’s wrists, pinning him against the brick wall of the ice cream parlor.

“Where are you going?”

Jimin’s face was twisted into pure agony, his eyes cracked diamonds, his heart crushed into fine powder. And he was angry, so fucking angry.

“You always— you always—“ Jimin ripped his wrists away, shoving Jungkook back. Was clawing hands through his hair, clutching his head, entire body thrumming with a wrenching self-destruct.

And then Jimin broke.

broke, shattered

shattered thoroughly, so thoroughly

millions of little glass pieces, sharp and cutting and raw

raw, raw, raw

And Jungkook saw *Jimin.* Saw every broken and smashed piece of him. Saw the obsidian choking Jimin's soul, staining and consuming. Saw the ice layered over his skin, chilling and frigid. A drowned man.

Saw it, saw it all.

And the maknae watched, watched as Jimin gagged on a sound almost strangling. Watched as Jimin's hands crushed up into fists, one arm pulling back, smashing his fist into the brick wall. Knuckles popping, blood already spiderwebbing from cuts, bruises sure to form.

Rage, so much rage.

Jungkook was moving, already shoving his was between Jimin and the wall, grabbing his coiled arms. Grabbed, wrestled, had Jimin pinned against the wall, holding him in place before he could punch the brick again.

"Jimin, stop."

But Jimin was gasping through seething, hot tears— trying to tear himself away, tear himself up.

"You'll hurt yourself."

Jimin's head dropped down, quivering with fury, tears flowing in rivulets down his face as he gritted his teeth. And somewhere in the rough and tumble, Jimin's glasses had clattered to the ground, were a couple feet away, baring Jimin's ocean eyes to the world.

"Why are you angry?"

Jimin shoved against Jungkook, still fighting him, still wanting to run.

"Are you angry at me? Because I stopped him? Is that why?"

Jimin shook his head, clenching his jaw so hard Jungkook thought it might crack.

"Then why? Why are you angry?"

"I'm not— I'm just— I'm—" Jimin gritted out a keening cry, shaking and shaking and shaking his head.

"Why, Jimin? Why run? Why do this?"

Jimin shook his head, didn't respond.

"Why are you so *angry? Who—"*

"I'm angry at myself!" Jimin screamed.

Stop, time stopped.

World, world stopped.

Everything halted and froze and stuttered.

Shock beat through Jungkook's chest, his mind quiet, staring at Jimin with wide eyes.

Mood: tokyo by RM

"I'm angry— I'm angry at myself," Jimin repeated, the rage burning like a forest fire, bright and blazing. "I fuck— I fuck *everything* up. I'm a fucking— fucking *worthless* , *disgusting whore* and I — and I hurt— I hurt—" Jimin shook his head, tears splashing down his cheeks, eyes desperate and glassy. Gasping for words, words, words. "I hurt—"

"Jimin?" Jungkook murmured.

Jimin suddenly went weak, limp. Buried his face in Jungkook's shoulder, legs buckling, Jungkook struggling to keep Jimin up and pinned to the wall. Felt the boney body he was pressing into brick start heaving with silent, aching cries. Cries that were all pain and no sound, cries that shredded, shredded, shredded you up inside and stole, stole everything.

"Why are you running?" Jungkook asked softly.

Jimin shook his head, almost biting Jungkook's shoulder as his frozen, locked up muscles fought past that first, dreadful sob. The sob that broke all resolve, all thought, all control. Began trembling.

Trembling so hard, so violently; he began breathing too urgently, too fast. Was sucking in breaths like he'd never breathed before, head whipping away from Jungkook and smacking back into the brick wall.

And Jungkook knew exactly what was happening. God, did he know. So he gently eased Jimin to the ground, still grasping his wrists.

"Hyung? Jimin? Look at me."

Jimin shook his head against the wall, tears soaking his cheeks and dripping off his chin. Muscles spasming with mute terror, eyes shut tight, everything straining with effort.

So Jungkook did the only thing he could think to do. Awkwardly reached forward and wrapped his arms around Jimin's shoulders, just holding him. And Jimin, Jimin was stiff and shaking and crumbling into ashes, but he clung onto Jungkook like the maknae was his lifeline, his anchor.

And they sat there. Sat like that on the dirty cement of the alleyway for what seemed like forever. Held each other, just holding on for now. Holding on, holding on.

And Jungkook knew in the back of his mind that Tae was probably confused as fuck, but he couldn't leave, not right now.

So he held Jimin, held him until his breathing calmed and the shaking stopped and the tears slowed down. Held him through it all, because for Jungkook, sometimes he'd just needed someone to hold him.

When Jimin finally nudged out of Jungkook's hold, the maknae let his arms fall away, sitting back against the wall next to him. Watched as Jimin's head tipped back against the brick behind them,

his eyes closed, deathly quiet.

“I’m angry at myself.”

Jungkook couldn’t even begin to muster words that would suffice. But it didn’t seem like Jimin needed any more prompting or pushing. He was already shattered, already empty.

“I’m angry,” Jimin huffed out a heavy, shuddering breath. “I’m angry because I’m *me.* Because I— I’m angry— I’m angry because I ran. Because I always run. I’m angry because… I’m angry because I’m toxic, because I ruin every good thing I touch.”

Jimin was practically slumped back against the wall now. Devoid of energy, devoid of life.

“I’m angry because I… because I hurt Hoseok; I’m angry because I hurt Jihyun. I’m angry,” Jimin stole another shallow breath. “I’m angry because I hurt you. Because I always hurt you the most.”

Jungkook turned his head away, everything weak and wobbly and cut open. Didn’t want to even think about crying. Not right now. So he didn’t say anything. Sat there biting his lip, swallowing at the aching sand clogging his throat. Sat there and refused to let his own tears fall.

“I’m angry because I loved him. Because I gave him every fucking piece of me that I had. I trusted him. I left Hoseok for him. I fucking-- I fucking *starved* myself for him. And for what?” Jimin bit out a bitter laugh, tears straining the air between them. “I hurt everyone. And I *hate* myself for it. For being so fucking naive and stupid.”

Jungkook didn’t say anything to that. Could tell Jimin wasn’t really talking to him. And so he didn’t utter a word. And it was quiet again. Quiet for a long, long time. Quiet until Jimin broke it, broke their stand still with time.

“How’d you know?”

Jungkook tucked his knees up to his chest, wrapping his arms around his legs, mirroring Jimin’s position. “Minwo called from your phone.”

Jimin flinched at Minwo’s name, head turning away from Jungkook, staring at that fence. He hummed low in his throat, running a hand through his messy hair. “I’m sorry.”

Jungkook stared at his feet. “You don’t have to be sorry.”

Jimin shook his head. “I shouldn’t… I shouldn’t have asked you. I should’ve just walked… but I thought— I thought if there was anyone who… anyone who wouldn’t care enough to stop me, it would be you.”

“Why would you…” Jungkook cringed at Jimin’s words, something akin to guilt swallowing his chest. “Why would you think I didn’t care?”

Jimin shrugged. “You hate me.”

“I don’t-”

“You should.”

“I don’t.”

“Dislike me, then. Whatever it is. I don’t know.”

Jungkook took a deep breath, arms tightening around his legs. “I don’t think I ever really hated you. It was… it was Minwo I hated, never you.” Jungkook picked at a loose thread on his jeans. “There were just… so many things I didn’t understand, and I was just a close-minded asshole who wasn’t willing to look past the fact that you were dating the guy that’d helped ruin my life.”

Jimin wiped some tears from his cheeks with the back of his hoodie sleeve, sniffling. “Don’t say anything to make me feel better. I don’t deserve it. Not after what I’ve done to you.”

There was that fucking word again.

Deserve.

Jungkook was already shaking his head. “No, I’m not saying those things to… to make you feel better. You’re a good person… and you’re my friend.”

Jimin huffed out a bitter laugh. “Friend?”

Jungkook nodded. “You are.”

Jimin wiped at his face, a fresh well of tears springing up in his eyes. He sniffed, threading his fingers through his hair and keeping them there. “Why did you stop me?”

“Running isn’t going to solve anything.”

“It’s always worked before.”

“What about Hoseok?”

Jimin flinched hard at Hoseok’s name. “I’ve never done anything but hurt him. It’s better if I leave.”

“No, it’s not.” Jungkook glanced over at Jimin. “He’d just hurt more if you left.”

Jimin shook his head. “He survived last time. He’ll survive again.”

“No,” Jungkook insisted. “Last time… he didn’t tell me what happened, but I’ve never seen him so… broken. He didn’t sleep, he didn’t eat; he walked around as if someone had died. He was like that for months, Jimin. You leave like this and it’ll tear him apart.”

Jimin rested his chin on his knees, closing his eyes. “I can’t… I can’t face him. I can’t tell him I’m leaving.”

“He loves you.”

Jimin nodded, shoulders shaking as he bit back a sob. Buried his face in his knees, arms locked tightly around his legs. “I love him, too.”

Jungkook couldn’t understand how Jimin’s thinking process worked, but he would try. “Then why run?”

Jimin huffed out a shaky breath, face still hidden against his knees. “It’s all I know.”

Jungkook didn’t think he should press on that, so he let a few moments of silence pass before he cautiously wrapped an arm over Jimin’s hunched shoulders. “If you care about Hoseok at all, you won’t leave like this.”

Jimin turned his head to the side, looking up into Jungkook's eyes. "I can't do this to him again."

"Do what?"

"I…" Jimin's lips were open, grasping at words in the empty air. "I can't hurt him."

"Then what about Jihyun?"

More tears splashed down his cheeks at the mention of his younger brother, bottom lip wobbly. "He's okay without me."

"No," Jungkook murmured. "He's not."

Jimin shrugged his shoulders. "He's grown up. He doesn't need me anymore, not like when we were kids. He goes to university and has his own roommates and apartment and job. I have nothing, Jungkook. I would just drag him down if I stayed in his life."

Jungkook tightened his arm around Jimin's shoulders, pulling him a little closer. "He loves you. He's your brother. Don't you think disappearing would ruin him, too?"

Jimin didn't say anything.

Jungkook looked up at the harsh blue sky, spring rolling in already, chilly air a little warmer than it had been the last few months. "He thinks the world of you. He loves you more than I can even comprehend. So does Hoseok. They're both worried about you and they both love you and miss you. And what would you even do if you ran away? Live on the streets?"

Jimin scrubbed the tears from his cheeks. "I've done it before. I know how to survive. I'll make it work."

Jungkook wanted to prod, wanted to ask more about what that meant, but he stopped himself. Now wasn't the time for questions like that. "Don't go. Stay here."

"I can't. I can't go back to Minwo."

"I'm *definitely* not suggesting you go back to him. I'm saying you have people here that care about you."

"None that I haven't cut off or hurt."

"That's the thing, though. They love you, even if you did hurt them. I know Hoseok would give anything to have you back in his life."

"I can't-- I can't…"

"You can live at my house."

Jimin's eyes widened, head snapping to the side to look at Jungkook. "What? No- just… what? Why?"

"You're my friend," Jungkook offered, feeling a little shy.

Jimin shook his head, sniffling some more. "Why do you say that?"

"What?"

“That I’m your friend.”

“Because you are.”

Jungkook watched as Jimin scratched as his bloody, bruised knuckles. Watched as the broken young man next to him bit his lip, unbelieving of Jungkook’s words. “What about what I said to you that night? Didn’t you believe it?”

Jungkook felt the dark press of memories soft in his head, prying and pushing and there. “I did, for a moment. But… I think I know you better than I did that night in the courthouse. You can’t fool me with words like that anymore. So why did you say those things? ”

Jimin ducked his head in shame, running a hand through his hair. “I said it to get you out of there. I saw in your eyes that you’d fight him with all you had… and I… I couldn’t let you get hurt. I couldn’t let him hurt you, too.”

Jungkook swallowed the frustration at Jimin’s admission, didn’t want to get angry with how selfless Jimin had to be all the time. For once, he just wanted Jimin to put himself first. Would’ve gladly carried Jimin away from the house that night, carried him to safety. But Jungkook thought Jimin needed to leave on his own. Would’ve gone back if he’d saved him that night.

“Stay.”

Jimin flinched. “You don’t have to do that. I’ll be fine.”

“My hyungs… my hyungs love you. They’ve asked about you pretty much every day for the last three weeks. Especially Jin. He’s been whining about missing his Titanic soulmate.”

This made a little smile crack through Jimin’s somber aura. He huffed out a tiny laugh, shaking his head. “I miss him, too.”

“Then come live with us. Just until you get back on your feet. I can… I can even help you out a little with money.”

“No, no,” Jimin protested too quickly. “I don’t want that. I don’t want money.”

Jungkook nodded, awkwardly rubbing the back of his neck. “Okay… but you really can stay at my house. I mean, we don’t have an extra bed or anything… but we have the couch… and Jin cooks sometimes… and Yoongi, well… Yoongi’s there, too.”

Jimin licked his lips, staring at that fence again. “What about Minwo? What did he say? On the phone?”

Jungkook felt that queasy unease prickling on the back of his neck and down his arms, remembering Minwo’s words, his cut-off threats. “He, uh… he thinks I convinced you to leave him or something.”

Jimin’s face drained of color, his eyes snapping up to meet Jungkook’s gaze. “He did?”

Jungkook nodded slowly. “Why would he say that?”

Jimin sighed, closing his eyes for a second. “When you gave me that paper with your number… that night we looked at all your GCF pictures... he saw that on the security cameras.” Jimin kicked his toe into the concrete. “That’s why he kicked me out in the snowstorm that one night.”

Jungkook blinked in shock, mouth falling open a little. Tried to wrap his head around it. “What?”

Jimin wouldn’t look at him. “He thought… he thought I was cheating on him… with you…”

Heat flushed Jungkook’s face, burning beneath his skin. “But we’ve never… we never even… *what?”*

Jimin didn’t even shrug, continued staring straight ahead. “I’m sorry he called you. It didn’t even cross my mind to erase your number from the call history. I did every other time, but I guess I forgot this time. Which was really fucking stupid of me.”

Jungkook thought about Jimin those months ago, how he’d turned up on his doorstep shivering and wet, covered in snow. And thinking that it was inadvertently his own fault for that, even though he hadn’t known what giving Jimin his phone number would do, he felt guilty all the same. Not so much for the action of giving Jimin his phone number, but for his attitude the night Jimin had desperately needed help.

So he apologized.

And Jimin shook his head, denying Jungkook’s apology. “No, no. Don’t… don’t apologize. That… we’ve just… I think we’ve both done a lot of shit to each other.”

Jungkook agreed with a sad smile on his face, thinking of all the wasted time.

They sat in silence for a few more minutes, and Jungkook noticed the golden toned sunlight now filling the sky, how it had probably been close to an hour. And he thought about Tae sitting out there alone. Felt guilty for that, too.

“What do you want to do?” Jungkook asked, looking over at Jimin, really studying him. From the platinum blonde hair with coffee-colored roots to the way his skinny legs were tucked up into his chest, his small fingers digging into his shins.

Jimin looked at Jungkook, too. Eyes flicked over Jungkook’s face, searching, analyzing. And Jungkook saw the demons lurking in his gaze, dark and hurting and lost. Saw for a brief moment exactly what Minwo had done to him.

“Okay,” Jimin whispered. “Okay. I’ll… I’ll stay with you. Just until I get a job and save up for my own place. Just until then.”

Jungkook wrapped an arm over Jimin’s shoulders again, pulling him close. “You can leave whenever you want,” he assured him. “I don’t want to force you to stay. But know that people care about you and want you here."

Jimin leaned his head on Jungkook’s shoulder, releasing a long, shuddering breath. “Okay. I’ll… I’ll remember that.”

He needed Jimin.

Jimin, Jimin, Jimin

Jungkook had taken Jimin away.

He’d taken Jimin away.

Stolen Jimin.

Jimin, Jimin, Jimin

He needed Jimin. Needed the love of his life. Couldn't fathom why Jimin would've left, not when everything was so good. He'd given Jimin everything, after all. Everything.

Jimin, Jimin, Jimin

He needed

needed Jimin

Min-ah, needed his Min-ah.

And each word of the letter fueled Minwo's burning fury more and more until he couldn't handle it. Broke down on his living room floor, head clutched violently in his hands as he screamed. Rage, so much rage trapped beneath his skin, flowing through his blood.

Minwo screamed.

Chapter End Notes

as always, thank you all for the support. for the beautiful comments. for everything.
here's another chapter; i hope you liked it. <3
(who listens to the music i've linked? just curious haha)

a cup of water

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Mr. Kim, do you think Mr. Jeon is capable of committing this crime?”

Minwo’s voice came muffled through the heavy, beautifully carved wooden doors as Jimin sat outside. “Absolutely, sir.”

“Do you remember any circumstances involving Mr. Jeon and Ms. Lee that would make you say that?”

Minwo paused. “He’s the one that hired her. We had no need for her at GCF, and since the beginning he’d always acted strangely around her. He wouldn’t look her in the eyes and he wouldn’t talk to her, sometimes just stop talking in general when she came in the room. It was always suspicious to me. I thought they were dating for a while.”

A silence, then a rumble of lowered, whispering voices.

“Mr. Kim, do you believe Mr. Jeon and Ms. Lee were sexually involved, or that Mr. Jeon had any sort of preference towards her compared to other employees?”

“There’s no doubt in my mind that he was attracted to her in at least some capacity. I don’t know if they were sexually involved, but he acted really weird around her, especially before the incident.”

“When was the last time you saw Mr. Jeon before the incident?”

“I left the office early that day to head to Incheon. So, I’d have to say around eight that night.”

“And was there anything you noticed or anything that stood out to you about Mr. Jeon’s behaviour before you left?”

“He said he was going to be working really late. Not that it was unusual for him to work late, but he never really told me that. He would just do it. So that was a little weird to me.”

“And what about Ms. Lee? Did you see her that day?”

“No, sir.”

“When was the last time you’d seen Mr. Jeon and Ms. Lee interact before the incident?”

Minwo paused, and Jimin watched the tiny screen in the waiting room as his boyfriend shifted beneath the gazes of dozens of people, judge and jury. “I think I actually did see Ms. Lee that day. I walked past her in the hall before I was leaving. She was bringing Jungkook coffee.”

There were more whispers. Minwo hadn’t mentioned that to Jimin, and it was a pretty damning thing to say, especially with the lack of evidence to either conclude the charges or drop them.

“Mr. Kim, is there any doubt in your mind that it wasn’t Jeon Jungkook who assaulted Ms. Lee?”

“No, sir,” Minwo stated without hesitation. “There’s no doubt in my mind whatsoever.”

“Thank you, Mr. Kim.”

The attention in the room shifted over to Jungkook, Minwo going to take his seat. Jimin wasn't blind, saw the sheen of sweat on Jungkook's brow, the unshed tears in his eyes. He looked like he might cry, a mixture of fury and helplessness.

"Mr. Jeon, is it true that Ms. Lee brought you coffee?"

Jungkook was visibly pale, gripping the sides of his seat so hard the veins in his arms were popping out. "Yes, she did."

Another cacophony of whispers from the jury and spectators.

"When was the last time you saw Ms. Lee before the incident?"

"When she brought me coffee, sir."

"Mr. Jeon, did you ask her to bring you coffee?"

"Yes, sir."

"And which office of yours did she bring you coffee in?"

"My personal office, sir."

Another smattering of whispers.

"Who else has clearance for your personal office?"

Jungkook was practically shivering in the chair now, teasing his lip between his teeth, dark circles beneath his eyes. Jimin saw his throat muscles shift as he swallowed hard. "Only me and Namjoon have access to my personal office."

"And what do you need to get into your personal office?"

"A keycard."

"How many keycards are there to your personal office?"

"Two."

"And, as you said, it is true that you and Mr. Kim Namjoon are the sole possessors of the only two keycards?"

A pause. A shuddering breath. "Yes, sir."

"Did you ever let anyone borrow your card?"

Jungkook's eyes were wide. "No, sir."

"Did you have your card for the whole of the night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ever let anyone take or borrow your card?"

"No, sir."

"Not even a close friend? A family member?"

“No, sir. Never.”

“Thank you, Mr. Jeon.”

Jimin didn’t know much about legal work or court hearings or lawyers, but what he did understand was that Jeon Jungkook had just sunk a few feet deeper in this mess. Had just put himself at the place of the crime, with the victim, in the possible timeframe of when she’d been attacked.

Jimin stopped paying attention as the hearing went on. There’d been a dozen before just like it, all lasting hours and all asking the same questions in the hopes of prying out a confession. But Jungkook never budged; he hadn’t done it, hadn’t hurt her.

Half the jury believed the young CEO and half didn’t.

Jimin didn’t know where to stand. So he didn’t say anything. Not that he could, anyways. He was pretty sure Minwo would punch his teeth in if he ever spoke up for Jungkook.

If he ever thought to mention that his boyfriend might have been gone for four hours the night of the crime.

Jimin buried his face in his hands.

Jungkook dragged his feet through the now-empty halls of the courtroom. He was exhausted, his lawyers still conversing in a separate room, and he almost found himself falling asleep standing up, his head tipped back against the wall.

He groaned, head dipping forward as he tried to shake the sleep from his mind long enough to remember why the hell he was still waiting. It’d been two hours since the court session had adjourned, and he couldn’t help but think back to that damn cup of coffee.

Yes, she’d brought him coffee. But he hadn’t seen her after that, not until he’d found her bloodied, mangled body in his personal office. And yet, he knew he was even more fucked than before. He’d been the only one without an alibi in the first place, and now he was connected to her around the time the crime was committed.

He scrubbed his hands over his face, pressing his palms into his eyes as he thought about how sure Minwo had been, saying Jungkook could do something like that. And Minwo’s words echoed through his head, slamming into his mind over and over again as he walked.

The polished, white marble floors gleamed in the dim blue light from the dripping night sky outside. The magnificent, high arched windows glinted with Jungkook’s reflection as he passed, and the occasional chandelier dangled above him, glittering with crystals and yellow-white light.

It was peaceful, really.

Until he thought he heard someone.

And he knew the voice well enough to figure it was Jimin’s hushed whispers he was hearing. Talking to someone else. Hidden and quiet, so quiet.

Jungkook was suddenly very awake, drifting to the wall as he inched closer to the whispers. They sounded rushed and urgent, maybe a little fucked out. And something in the pit of Jungkook’s

stomach was telling him to turn around and walk the other way.

But he didn't.

And when he peeked through the gap between the marble column and the wall, he was met with a dark hallway, barely visible figures tangled in the shadows. A taller man, his face buried in the crook of someone's-- Jimin's-- neck, rocking their hips together, tugging and grasping.

"We can't-- god, we can't do this here."

The man shushed Jimin, continuing what he was doing.

"What if," a moan, "what if we get caught?"

The man mumbled something, voice still too quiet for Jungkook to recognize.

"Wait, wait. Just a second--"

The taller figure's voice was gravelly and low, familiar, but too muffled. Jungkook watched as the man shoved Jimin back into the wall, eliciting a surprised gasp.

And Jungkook's heart was twisting, already wrenching at something in his chest. Some part of himself that was still intact, untouched by all the chaos surrounding him. Because Jimin… he'd had a stupid crush on Jimin for a year and a half now. Hadn't thought… hadn't thought…

He needed to leave. It didn't matter. It wasn't any of his business. Jimin was his friend, had his own life, made his own decisions. And even if it wasn't Jungkook who was holding Jimin, kissing him, it was okay. It would have to be okay.

So he was going to leave, already pulling away from the tiny crevice between the marble column and the wall he was peering through. Heart a little crushed, a little heavier. But he'd get through it; he always did.

"Minwo~"

Jungkook blinked. Tilted his head to the side, trying to understand. Tried to connect the pieces. To put Minwo with Jimin. Blinked again. Too shocked to move. Or rather, his mind wasn't willing to let Jungkook feel it yet, the onslaught of feelings feelings like a tsunami in his head, just on the horizon.

"Minwo-ssi," Jimin moaned out again.

Jungkook covered his mouth with the palm of his hand to keep himself quiet, head spinning and lungs quaking. Felt a wave of nausea shoot through his stomach.

Because Jimin was fucking Minwo. Fucking him in the courthouse. And it explained everything. All the times Jungkook had seen Jimin in the halls at GCF, small and unnoticed. How Jungkook had usually seen Minwo a few steps later, always a few feet away. Always there, always lurking.

Jimin was… Jimin was Minwo's… Minwo's what? His husband? His boyfriend? His fuck-buddy?

Part of Jungkook was still holding onto the thread that was Jimin. The thread that had been carefully stitched through his heart the past year and a half. Because Jimin was kind. Jimin listened. Jimin saw Jungkook, not for the monster he was painted as, but for a young man desperately fighting for his freedom.

Jungkook wanted to run. Wanted to turn away, leave. But he was frozen, frozen, frozen. Some new kind of terror sizzling through his muscles, up his spine.

He couldn't move, couldn't move as he stood there blocking out the sounds of breathy moans and stolen whispers and thrusting. Blocked it all out, hands over his ears, bile rising in the back of his throat because Minwo had betrayed him so cruelly, and Jungkook still couldn't put Jimin to Minwo in his head.

"Damn it, Min-ah. Stop moving."

"Sorry, sorry-- ah!"

"Shut the fuck up," Minwo hissed.

"I'm- I'm sorry."

A few more minutes passed by with Jungkook pressed into the crook of the marble column and the wall, unable to move. His eyes were wide and blank, his head nothing but fucking static as nausea curled through his gut, wringing his stomach between hands of coal.

"That little bitch isn't going to last much longer," Minwo was saying as he grunted into Jimin. "He's gonna fucking lose."

"I know," Jimin whimpered. "I know."

Jungkook's mouth dropped open in shock, heart jerking violently.

"Did you see his fucking face when I finally revealed the coffee?"

"Ah- ye-yeah- ah!"

"The little fucker. Do you know how much he fucking deserves this?"

"I do, I do, Minwo-ssi." A feathered moan. "He won't hurt- hurt you anymore. He… he deserves it."

"That's right, Min-ah."

"He's a monster. Just like you said."

"You see it now, don't you?"

"I do. I see it."

Jungkook's hands were wrapped around the back of his neck, nails digging into his skin, rocking back and forth, back and forth. Because Jimin's smile, laugh, and grace were wrapped around his throat and he wasn't really breathing anymore, wasn't able to fucking breathe.

It was too much.

too much, too soon

breaking, breaking, breaking him up

didn't, didn't understand

understand how he'd lost another person, another friend

The person he'd been pining after for over a year and a half. A year and a half, and Jimin had hid it. Had been the person Minwo had gone to see in Incheon that night. Had been Minwo's alibi, brought up only once in court, not even a name mentioned because nobody even suspected Minwo.

Jungkook had always been one to trust too easily.

Pants being zipped up, buckles redone, shirts tucked in. Jungkook heard the distinct meeting of lips and tongue for a moment before Minwo was saying something about himself leaving first, for Jimin to wait at least five minutes before joining him out at the car.

Minwo emerged into the beaming light of the courthouse hall, and Jungkook's lungs were about to burst with a loathing scream. But Minwo didn't notice him, walking the opposite way down a different hall. Jungkook watched his enemy's back, watched as the man disappeared.

And Jungkook couldn't even move, body refusing to budge, an exhaustion he didn't quite understand gripping him. A snake of bone, twisting and cracking and tightening around Jungkook's head. Everything muffled and wobbly and fuzzed out.

And then Jimin stepped out of the little hallway.

But unlike Minwo, he actually looked around.

Jimin gasped.

"Jungkook-- what are you…"

Jungkook saw the panic gleaming in Jimin's eyes. But his heart, it wasn't beating. Wasn't warm. Because they'd known each other for about a year and a half now. And Jimin, who was so beautiful and kind, was Minwo's--

"Minwo?" Jungkook asked brokenly.

Jimin's eyes flitted over Jungkook's face. He dipped his head, almost in shame. "What did you… what are you…"

"'He's gonna fucking lose,'" *Jungkook quoted.* "'I know, I know… he deserves it.'"

Jimin flinched, retreating into himself. "I'm sorry."

"You said that to him, too."

"He's not… I didn't…"

"You didn't tell me you were fucking the man trying to put me behind bars for the rest of my life."

Jimin's head snapped up, eyes narrowing. A switch had been flipped. "He's not trying to do anything. He's just telling the truth."

"You believe him?"

Jimin shrugged. "I guess so. It makes sense, right?"

Jungkook tried, tried so hard to block the sting in his chest, growing and pulsing softly with hurt. "You think I did that to her?"

Jimin's eyes flashed with something akin to hesitation, but locked onto a different emotion a second later. "Who else could it have been?"

Fire snicking to life, singing the threads holding Jungkook's heart together. Threads and stitches that'd been carefully sewn over the past few months, meant to keep him put together. Smoke, curling and rancid, smelling of burnt hope and lost dreams and a crushed soul.

"So this whole time, this whole time you were doing what?" Jungkook's vision was red, red with the fire in his head, the rage he'd accumulated the past months. "Got close to me just so you could fuck with my head? Play a little game, see where it goes?"

"Maybe I was."

Jimin's hands were curled into fists, Jungkook standing up. No longer frozen, no longer shocked. The bitter reality had finally hit him, tsunami smashing against a shore. Jimin wasn't who Jungkook had thought he was.

"Then, what? You didn't want to tell me you were fucking him this whole time? That every time you talked to me or saw me it was because you were waiting for him? Every damn time?"

"That's none of your business," Jimin snapped. "It's not. It's my *life."*

"I thought you were my friend."

"So because I'm fucking Minwo we can't be friends?" A damning silence. "Why were you waiting? Why stay? Why even do this?"

"Because you've been lying to me for the past year and a half, Jimin. You didn't… I was… you lied *to me."*

Jimin froze, eyes shuttering like a camera lens. "Why does it matter?"

Because Jungkook, he'd had a huge crush on Jimin since that afternoon in the lobby when they'd first met. Because Jungkook had felt like Jimin had genuinely wanted to be his friend, even when everyone else thought he was a savage brute. Because Jimin was… Jimin was Jimin.

Jimin had given Jungkook a little bit of hope in his utterly dark world.

"How long?"

A pause, hesitation. "Two years in December."

Jungkook turned away, scratching at the back of his neck, digging his nails into soft skin. Clawed at his neck, eyes shutting hard.

"Stop that. You'll hurt yourself."

Jungkook ignored him.

"Jungkook-"

"Why did he never mention you?"

"I'm a secret."

Ice cracked through the blood in Jungkook's veins. "And you probably live with him and

everything, too?”

Jimin didn’t say anything.

“Two years?” Jungkook repeated breathlessly, eyes faraway. He swallowed at the aching lump in his throat, blinking fast. “Why? Why lie? Why play me like this?”

Jimin looked just as lost and desperate and confused as Jungkook felt. And the maknae saw, saw Jimin’s eyes shift from one emotion to the next, turning and twisting and tumbling over edge after edge. And finally, finally it seemed Jimin had found his answer.

Because Jimin’s eyes, they flickered with pain for a brief moment. Flickered, then it was gone. Gone and replaced with cold, hard stone. A decision made.

“You’re right.”

Jungkook blinked stupidly. “What?”

“It was all just a game to me.”

Jimin’s ocean eyes, they were all Jungkook could see, all he could focus on. Vision tunneled in on cool brown, on the traces of confliction Jungkook was still getting. Confliction that just confused more, his mind pulling away farther and farther, everything numb.

“You deserve it after what you did to the assistant.”

Jungkook was shutting

"Minwo was right about you. You're a monster."

shutting down

"And I never really cared. I never did."

couldn’t remember to function, to think

couldn’t

"So just leave me the fuck alone, Jungkook."

And Jungkook was turning away, turning away as Jimin’s words chased him, those diamond eyes still conflicted. And Jungkook, he thought this was what hate must feel like. He’d always thought he’d hated Minwo, but nothing compared to this.

nothing compared

Jungkook ran.

And he didn’t… he didn’t really remember what happened after that. Wouldn’t really remember it, refused to.

That was the last time he saw Jimin for months.

Jimin didn’t have nightmares. Or at least he didn’t think he could call them that. What he did have

were memories, pulsing and rocking through his skull. Kept him up all night, the darkness engulfing him.

It'd only been a few days since he'd run away. A few days, and all he'd accomplished was wallowing around on Jungkook's couch: crying, hurting, aching.

He was thinking too much. Thinking about Minwo, how in love Jimin really had been, how attached. Couldn't stop thinking his hands were still cuffed, forehead pressed firmly into the cool material of the punching bag as Minwo stood behind him: a shadow, a demon.

And Jimin didn't wake up gasping or crying. He simply woke up, eyes opening slowly, staring blankly at that big window. The night clothed the room in tendrils of blanketed navy blue, reaching out and caressing his face as he shivered, burying himself further beneath his covers.

Now?

Out.

It's winter… I'll freeze.

If you don't follow the rules of my house, you can't be here.

But I have nowhere else to go.

And why is that, Min-ah?

Jimin shook his head, hitting his forehead with the palm of his hand, trying to dash those memories away. He didn't want to think about Minwo's twisted, cruel face. The soothing hand on his back, the gentle fingers tying his shoelaces. How he'd been so carefully steered towards the door.

He didn't want to fucking think anymore.

So he laid awake, staring at that window. Kept thinking and thinking and thinking. And sometimes, he wished he couldn't think at all. Sometimes he wished he didn't have any memories in his head. Wanted to crack his skull open and pluck them out one by one.

Go back to the simpler times, curled in bed as a five-year-old with Jihyun pressed to his side. Or later, when running from the foster homes was as easy as breathing to him. Simpler times, when Hoseok had found him in the gutters, offering a warm bed and some home-cooked food; then Hoseok had offered something infinitely more precious: family, love, and safety.

He missed Hoseok.

And that's what made the tears start rolling down his face. Thinking about his best friend. He missed him. He missed him so much his heart ached in his too-small chest. His shoulders shook as he sucked in breaths between clenched teeth, pressing his palms into his eyes as hot tears smeared over his cheeks.

He missed Hoseok so goddamn much.

And Jimin had left. He always left. Always ran away. And for the love of god, if he could travel back in time, he'd weld himself to Hoseok's side. He never would've started anything with Minwo, never would've left his best friend after that stupid fight. He would've kept dancing, kept going to university, kept visiting his parents and Jihyun in Busan.

He would've talked to Jungkook more, maybe become his actual friend instead of his enemy's lover. Never would've said that shit in the courthouse that night. Never would've lied.

Jimin tried to quiet his desperate sobs by pressing the blanket into his mouth, muffling his shuddering breaths, his sniffles and whines. Because he felt so utterly pathetic, so useless, so stupid.

He'd done this to himself, and yet he had the audacity to hurt for it.

It wasn't until there was someone sitting on the edge of the couch, gently pulling the blanket away from Jimin's face that he finally opened his eyes.

Jungkook was looking back at him, black hair ruffled and messy and sticking up from sleep. His face was puffy, his eyes squinted, and Jimin couldn't help but think he looked innocent like this, having just woken. Innocent and kind and good.

"I'm… I'm sorry… if I woke you up," Jimin croaked, guilt already gnawing at his ribs.

Jungkook shook his head, rubbing one of his eyes with the back of his hand, other hand now resting on Jimin's thin shoulder. "I came down to get a drink of water."

Jimin didn't say anything, only closed his eyes, pressing a hand over his face to hide how ridiculous he must look. "I'm sorry," Jimin whispered again.

But Jungkook just squeezed Jimin's shoulder gently, shaking his head. Didn't even have to say anything; they'd had that conversation too many times.

"Do you want some water?" Jungkook offered instead.

Jimin finally moved his hand from his face, looking up at the maknae. He didn't nod or agree or ask, but Jungkook must've seen it in his eyes, already getting up from the edge of the couch. Jimin watched the maknae's lithe form walk through the blue darkness of the room, over into the kitchen. Opened a cupboard, getting two cups.

And it was… it was like the first time they'd met. Back in the GCF lobby, sitting at that little table by the wall of windows, everything so easy and simple. And Jimin couldn't help the tiniest spark of calm soothe into his limbs at that, the tears slowly coming to a stop.

Jungkook sat on the other end of the couch by Jimin's feet, offering him a cup of water. Jimin pushed himself to sit up, swiping at the drying tears on his face. He took the cup, cradling it in his hands, timidly looking down into it. His throat was raw, his head stuffed from how much crying he'd been doing, and he gratefully took a sip.

They sat there in silence for a while, just sipping at water. Jungkook was done with his faster than Jimin, and Jimin almost expected the maknae to leave. But he didn't, sat there running his thumb over the smooth lip of the cup, fiddling with it.

"Are you sure I didn't wake you up?" Jimin worried.

"You didn't. I rarely sleep through the night without wandering around the house." A tired smile tugged at Jungkook's lips as he stared down at the cup in his hands. "Tae gets really annoyed by it because sometimes I'll sneak into his room and curl up in his bed, just because I don't want to sleep alone."

Jimin briefly wondered why Jungkook rarely slept through the night. Wondered if he was haunted,

torn apart inside just as much as Jimin was. But Jungkook… Jimin had often only seen him strong, only ever seen him with fire in his eyes and a purpose in his steps, even two years ago when they'd just met.

The fact that Jungkook couldn't sleep through the night for some reason had Jimin feeling even more guilty about this whole thing than he was before. His whole life, he'd done everything he could not to be a burden for others.

With his parents, he'd done all he could to raise Jihyun and look after him so that they didn't get mad, didn't feel burdened with more than they could handle; it was the beginning that counted.

The beginning, when it'd gotten too much going days without food because his father hadn't come home from the bars and his mother was on the kitchen floor with a needle up her arm. When Jimin had called child protective services for his brother, for himself. When everything had gone to hell.

With the foster families, they'd always told him or expressed in some form that he was a burden, so he'd always left. Always. Always packed up and ran away. Sent to a worse family every time, his tarnished record discouraging the nice families like Jihyun's from taking him in.

With Hoseok, at the boiling point of their last few weeks together, Jimin had known he was burdening his best friend whenever he came home with bruises, with another excuse, another lie. And with Minwo's words, it'd built up enough that he'd convinced himself to leave again. He'd left.

And Minwo. With Minwo, he'd always felt like he was asking too much. Always felt like he was too demanding, too needy, too clingy. So he'd adapted. He'd adapted to Minwo's idea of a burden, had changed himself to fit Minwo's mold. But he'd left in the end, anyways.

And here, here Jungkook was probably dealing with enough shit already; Jimin was just another burden on a checklist. He always had been and always would be. So he didn't understand why Jungkook was still sitting there with him, long after he'd finished his drink. Didn't understand; no, not at all.

Jungkook, he seemed so genuine and young and raw. It got to Jimin, as it always had, both how much and how little Jungkook had changed since that day in the lobby.

"What does Tae do?" Jimin asked quietly, mind rather far away. Was trying to get his mind off of the past. "For work?"

Jungkook seemed to figure that's what Jimin was doing. Didn't look phased by the sudden change of topic. "Photography and painting. He goes by Vante, holds an open gallery once a year, has clients that pay thousands for his pieces. He's really good."

Jimin nodded, thinking he might want to see Tae's work one day if he still hadn't run by then. "What about Jin? He works at a restaurant, right?"

"He owns a restaurant chain throughout Seoul and even a few other cities," Jungkook clarified.

Jimin's eyebrows rose at that. He didn't know why they were talking about this, but it was getting his mind off of Minwo, so he didn't mind at all. "And Yoongi?"

"Yoongi produces music for a company called BigHit. He's gotten a few awards and stuff."

Jimin nodded. He could see Yoongi doing something like that. "So… you're all really successful and probably rich… and you still share the same house?"

Jungkook smiled at that. “We’re more like family than anything, you know? It would be really lonely if we all lived separate.”

Jimin studied Jungkook, saw the glow in his eyes when he talked about his hyungs. It made more sense now when Jimin thought back on how he’d reacted to Jimin the first time he’d been here. How Jungkook had gotten so jealous of Jimin sleeping on Jin’s lap.

Jungkook had just been worried about the people he loved, was fiercely loyal and protective of what was his.

“A family?”

Jungkook nodded, a little blush rising to his cheeks. He didn’t look so sleepy anymore. Still looked tired as hell, but wasn’t fighting to keep his eyes open. And Jimin felt a little pang in his chest, thinking about how he’d left his own family. He’d left Hoseok, left Jihyun.

And it was like Jungkook read Jimin’s mind.“What about Jihyun? What does he do?”

Just the mention of Jimin’s brother sent a shiver down his spine. A physical ache was building up in his chest, yearning for his kid brother. “He’s majoring in math. He wants to be a university professor one day.”

Jungkook nodded, the tiny smile slipping away. “And what about you?”

What about Jimin? Jimin huffed a little, thinking back to the thousands of hours he’d poured into dancing. Practicing until he was sweating blood. Pouring himself into music until there was nothing left.

“It doesn’t matter anymore.”

“Why?”

“It just doesn’t.”

Jungkook was staring at Jimin, staring right into his eyes. And Jimin found himself shifting a little uncomfortably at the intruding, searching look the maknae was giving him. And those beautiful brown eyes, they were so deep, contained such an inquisitive soul.

“It does, hyung. You matter, and so does your future.”

Future? Jimin was still stuck in the past, spinning and whirling through memories. Still thinking about Minwo, how it’d felt to kiss and hold and love the man. Still thought about it, even after everything Minwo had done. So how could he possibly think about the future? How could he?

“If you say so, Jungkook-ah,” Jimin whispered a little numbly, heart throbbing painfully in his chest. “If you say so.”

Jungkook looked into Jimin’s eyes before nodding stiffly to himself, shifting a little awkwardly. “It’ll get better.”

Jimin refused to let out the sarcastic huff caught in his throat. Instead, he just let the silence swallow them whole, pull them down, down, down.

“Jimin,” Jungkook murmured.

Jimin gaze was caught in Jungkook’s, then.

“It’s okay…” Jungkook whispered with a small nod to himself. “It’s okay to hurt.”

And then the maknae was standing. And Jimin watched Jungkook’s form retreat into the darkness. Heard the now-familiar creak of the stairs. Listened for the near-imperceptible sound of Jungkook’s bedroom door shutting.

Jimin was alone once more.

But it all hurt a tiny bit less now.

All because of Jeon Jungkook and a cup of water.

Chapter End Notes

sorry about this chapter... idk i don't really like it very much? but it's kinda essential to the story so... here it is.
(haha here ya go anita)

blood on my hands

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"So he left Minwo?"

Jungkook didn't say anything, only stared at Hoseok as the dancer huffed out a breath, dark circles once again painted beneath his eyes. Hoseok was leaned forward, chin resting on a fist as he gazed at the slowly warming park. And he honestly looked like he was about to cry, eyes flitting up to the sky, blinking. Jungkook didn't want him to cry. Didn't like seeing his hyungs upset.

"Is he okay?"

Jungkook shifted on the bench, rubbing his cold hands together before folding them over his chest. "I don't know."

Hoseok continued gazing at the clouds, warm brown eyes illuminated and glowing and sad. "He didn't come back to me."

Jungkook sucked in a breath, mind turning back to how Jimin had sobbed against him, pinned to the wall. "He doesn't want to hurt you."

Hoseok's eyes finally started to water, but he kept blinking the tears away, refusing to cry. "It's too late for that."

Jungkook chewed on his bottom lip, eyes wide as his gaze flitted over the park, taking in the skeleton trees. The sun filled the newborn sky with bright, white light. Glorious. Splendid. A beautiful morning, even though the trees had yet to bud, the flowers still shrivelled from winter. But it was perfect, and spring would be there soon.

"He told me I didn't do anything wrong… but I can't help but think I did. That this is all my fault."

"Hyung…" Jungkook murmured, eyes trained on Hoseok once more. "It's not your fault."

"It is," Hoseok whispered. "If it wasn't for me, Jimin probably never would've met Minwo."

Jungkook's brows drew together, heart trilling with nerves. "What do you mean?"

Hoseok drew in a deep breath, eyes closing as a gentle, cool breeze lifted the air, the sun disappearing behind a few clouds. "Do you remember when I would go visit you at GCF? Do you remember that?"

Jungkook nodded, thinking back to when Hoseok would drive up from Incheon every month or so to visit him.

And Yoongi.

"I took Jimin with me once. He wandered off. Then you came and I started talking to you, and an hour went by and I didn't even realize Jimin hadn't come back. And then you were called upstairs for another meeting… Jungkook-ah, he said he'd been talking to someone. It was Minwo. It had to have been. And it's my fault. If I hadn't taken Jimin… If I hadn't taken him that day, he never would've met him."

Jungkook gingerly reached over, hand on Hoseok's back. "You can't think like that, hyung. If we started taking blame for stuff like that, why don't we just say it was ultimately my fault? I'm the one that hired Minwo in the first place."

Hoseok huffed, shaking his head. He looked like he was waging a war in his head.

Jungkook patted him gently on the back before standing from the bench, hand lingering on his hyung's shoulder. Hoseok stood, too, shoving his hands in the pockets of his white and black polka-dotted coat. Jungkook wrapped his arms around Hoseok's frame, pulling him into a tight embrace. "It'll be okay. Everything will be okay."

Hoseok sighed, resting his head on Jungkook's shoulder. "You're so grown up, Kookie. I guess you're not a kid anymore."

Jungkook scrunched his nose, pulling back. "You always say that, and you always act surprised. I've been grown up for a while."

Hoseok smiled, reaching up and ruffling Jungkook's hair, messing it up. Jungkook bit back the whine in his throat, letting Hoseok do it just this once.

"You'll still always be my little Jungkookie, though."

Jungkook sighed.

Hoseok's smile faded a little, wilting as he looked up at Jungkook. "Make sure he eats good. He… he doesn't eat when he's stressed, and when I saw him last he was… he was really skinny."

Jungkook nodded, shoving his hands in his pockets, shaking the bangs from his eyes. "I'll look after him."

Hoseok smiled sadly. "I think… I think maybe he needs more space from me. I'll try and visit in a little bit, though."

Jungkook gave Hoseok one last hug, dodging his hyung's attempt to pinch his cheeks before they walked back to their cars. The bitter sun seemed a little brighter, and the flowers were beginning to peak from the earth. A bird sang, and the world was coming to life once more. Spring was coming.

"Tell Yoongi I said hi," Hoseok added.

Jungkook grinned.

It'd been a week now. A week since Jungkook had sat with him in the dirty alleyway behind the ice cream parlor, talking him out of running away. Part of Jimin was relieved Jungkook had offered a place to stay. But the other part still wanted to run.

And now, now Jimin kept dreaming about his boyfriend and how he'd promised to never leave. And yet he'd left.

He'd left Minwo.

He'd really done it.

And he felt guilty. He refused to say it out loud, especially to Jungkook, but he missed Minwo.

Sometimes wondered if there was something wrong with him. He didn't miss the man he'd left, but he did miss the man he'd fallen in love with two years previous. Missed the rare good days.

Now Jimin was curled on the familiar living room couch, Jin's bright yellow blanket wrapped around his shoulders. Yoongi was sitting on the couch next to him, doing something on his laptop. Looked like he was composing a song or writing lyrics or something.

Jungkook was with someone named Hayoon, Jin was at work, and Tae was… where was Tae? Jimin thought he remembered the other 95'er saying something about going out to walk around the city and take photos with someone named Namjoon. But either way, it was just the two of them.

"Hyung?" Jimin asked carefully.

Yoongi hummed, not looking up from his laptop, still typing away.

Jimin felt bad for always talking about dark things with Yoongi, about always wanting to ask prying questions, but he had to know if he was crazy. If it was just him. He'd been mulling his thoughts around in his head for days now.

"Did you ever miss her?"

Yoongi's typing slowed to a stop before he looked up at Jimin, expression closed. "Miss her?"

Jimin nodded, shyly looking down at the blanket, playing with the edge of it. "I miss him," Jimin admitted. "I mean, I don't… I don't miss what he did to me. But I miss the good times."

It was silent for long enough that Jimin finally looked up from the blanket, meeting Yoongi's hooded gaze. The other young man was studying him, eyes deep and cool, but caring. Yoongi had subtly stayed by his side the past few days, always looking aloof and disinterested, but making sure Jimin never felt too alone.

Jimin was afraid of being alone.

Yoongi sucked in air between his teeth as he started talking. "It's been a long time… but I remember missing her. I actually went back to her once or twice because I missed her so much. But nothing ever changed, and I realized I was going back just to put myself through hell again and again." Yoongi paused, eyes travelling over to the TV, lingering. "It's normal to miss them. Just don't let it sway you into going back."

Jimin soaked up Yoongi's words, processing and sorting and pinning them up where they belonged in his head. Because he wasn't crazy, and that comforted him a lot more than he thought it should.

Yoongi went back to typing on his computer, Jimin focusing on the TV. They were watching Dragonball Z, Yoongi's favorite show ever, but Jimin was more just staring at it and not watching. Was thinking about how Jungkook had told him Yoongi composed songs for BigHit. And Jimin was curious, though he hesitated on asking for the better part of an hour.

"Can you play me one of your songs?" Jimin finally asked, rather out of the blue.

Yoongi's brows rose at that. This had been the most Jimin had really actually talked in the entire last week, mostly curled up into himself, crying through bleeding days and bitter nights.

"I rap… I don't know if you like rap."

Jimin shrugged, thinking about how Minwo hadn't let him listen to rap at all during the two years

they'd… the two years... (what the hell had it even been? Not dating. Lover sounded wrong. Minwo hadn't really ever treated Jimin like a lover… It was just another point of confusion Jimin was trying to work out in his crowded head.)

"I like rap," Jimin decided.

Yoongi said something about Jimin having good taste, the praise lighting something warm in Jimin's chest. He watched as Yoongi clicked around on his laptop for a second before pulling something up, scrolling through a list. He paused a few times, as if debating which song he wanted Jimin to hear.

Mood: So Far Away by Agust D (feat. SURAN)

He finally clicked play on one of the songs, the music starting up. It was a little lighter than Jimin thought it'd be, starting with an upbeat tone and a woman vocalizing in the background. And then Yoongi's voice eased into the song with the opening lines and Jimin was blown away. Had never heard lyrics that touched his hurting soul so much.

That's right, fuck, I live because I can't die

But I don't have anything I want to do

I'm in so much pain and loneliness, but people around me

Keep telling me to regain my consciousness

I try to vent my anger but I only got myself

So what's the point of venting my anger

I'm scared to open my eyes everyday and start breathing

By the end of the song, Jimin was frozen, clinging to the craftily woven lines. Clung to the memory of them, most of the words already forgotten, but the feeling still there. He looked at Yoongi again, knowing he'd seen it since the beginning, the understanding, but it was different now. Different after hearing his song.

Jimin nodded at Yoongi, a simple dip of the chin. "Thank you."

Yoongi took in Jimin's thanks, hesitating a little. "Did you like it?"

"I did. I… I understand the song. The lyrics. I understand." Yoongi looked Jimin in the eyes for a moment before nodding to himself, ready to go back to his work. But Jimin couldn't stop himself from asking, a little desperate for music. "Could I… I don't know. I don't have a phone or anything, but is there a way I can listen to it more?"

Yoongi seemed pleased to have found someone that really understood his lyrics. But even so, Jimin could tell he was still surprised by the question, eyebrows creasing for a second, shoulders lifting a few times in a little shrug dance as he thought.

"I can burn it onto a CD. It hasn't been released yet, so you have to swear on your life not to lose it. Jungkook has a box of junk under his bed, and I'm pretty sure he has a portable CD player that's been collecting dust for years. He insists he uses it, but he never does."

Jimin nodded, a little excited at the thought of listening to not just Yoongi's music, but music in general. He hadn't really had access to music since he'd moved in with Minwo.

"Do you have any other songs?" Jimin asked.

Yoongi smiled.

Jungkook finished towelling off his wet hair, having taken a shower after his bouts with Hayoon. She'd taken hers first, was already wearing her pink, bunny-themed pajamas, curled up in the covers of her bed. Jungkook tossed his damp towel in the dirty clothes hamper, sitting down next to Hayoon on the mattress.

She made room for him, scooting over a little, cradling her laptop on her crossed legs. "Wait, so he's living with you now?" Hayoon asked, delicate brows raised.

Jungkook nodded. "Yeah. I guess so."

"What if he's trying to mess with you?"

Jungkook sighed, running a hand through his wet hair. It'd been a week since Jimin had "moved in." Jimin didn't move much from the couch, sleeping all day and lying awake all night. Exhausted, hurt, broken. "I don't think so…" He glanced at his jacket, lying discarded on the floor. "I actually… I don't know. It's complicated." He heaved a deep breath in, pushed it out. Changed the subject. "I got some evidence. Like you said."

Hayoon's eyes lit up. "You did? You managed to get something?"

Jungkook reached for his jacket, scooping his hand into the pocket and pulling out the black USB he'd managed to upload the video onto. Still hadn't watched it.

"Here," Hayoon said, holding out her slim hand.

Jungkook handed over the USB, watching as Hayoon plugged it into her laptop, waiting for it to come up on the screen. It wasn't long before she clicked on a few things, pulling up the video. But before she pressed play, Jungkook put his hand over hers on the mouse pad. She looked up at him.

"It's… it's pretty graphic," Jungkook warned, something disgusting in his chest. A toxic guilt seeping into every inch of his body, slimy and greasy and made of oil.

Hayoon kept Jungkook's gaze, searching his eyes. Saw something, because she suddenly looked worried. "Are you okay?"

"I don't know," he mumbled. He stole another deep breath, tipping his head up to look at the ceiling. "It reminded me of… her."

Something infinitely sad lit in Hayoon's gaze as she pressed her hand into Jungkook's back, rubbing up and down in warm, soothing strokes. "I'm sorry, Kook. I didn't even think about that. I was just… I don't know, I thought it would help expose Minwo for the type of person he really is."

Jungkook nodded slowly, closing his eyes, feeling a little nausea roll through his stomach. He swallowed hard. "I feel… I feel bad. I feel like his… his blood is on my hands."

Hayoon shook her head, long, dark hair shifting around her shoulders. "No, no. Don't think like

that."

Jungkook shrugged her hand off his back, peering down at the laptop screen. "I tried to save him… but he pushed me away."

"You don't have to watch it, Kook. I can make sure it has good quality."

Jungkook shook his head. "I shot the video. I need to watch it."

There was a moment of silence before Hayoon pressed play.

It was a good shot, right through the back kitchen window. Jungkook was able to see the dining room, the long mahogany table set with dinner. Jimin was busy at the oven when the front door opened, and instantly Jimin stiffened.

Jungkook watched Minwo toss his bags to the side, backing Jimin up against the kitchen counter, kissing him roughly. Jimin pushed Minwo away a little, reaching up and touching Minwo's neck. Minwo got irritated at something Jimin said. Jimin's head lowered in submission. Jungkook's hands clenched into fists.

There were a few minutes of the video where nothing really happened. Jimin and Minwo were eating dinner… well, Minwo was. Jimin was pushing salad around on his plate, other arm hugging his stomach. They talked a little, mouths moving, and it wasn't until about ten minutes into the video that Jimin said something that pissed Minwo off.

It looked like they began arguing, Minwo's face twisting in fury, Jimin's back to the camera. But then Minwo was standing up, slamming his fists down onto the table.

Jungkook remembered this part, though it had gone by in a flash. He remembered how Jimin had stood up, too. How Minwo had rushed at him. Thrown that plate. And watching it, watching that ceramic disk smash against Jimin's forehead…

Jungkook's hands were shaking, vision narrowed in on the screen. He watched the rest of the video with the same mute horror from that night. Watched as Jimin was thrown around like a ragdoll, legs kicked until they were bleeding, face punched until it was dripping crimson.

That's when the video cut off. Right as Minwo started choking Jimin against the wall. That's when Jungkook had almost run away, had almost left Jimin for dead.

Jungkook's gaze stayed frozen on the black screen, neither of them speaking. He replayed the scenes from the video in his head, comparing them to the fresh, stark memory of what he'd seen that night. He swallowed and swallowed, suppressing the urge to vomit.

When he finally did look at Hayoon, tears were soaking her cheeks, her lip trembling. She looked up at him, horrified, before setting her laptop aside and striding into the bathroom, lock clicking.

She didn't come out.

Jungkook took the USB out of the laptop port and slipped it back in his pocket, pulling on his jacket. He left a note, saying goodnight. And then he walked out, guilt eating him alive.

The USB was a heavy, whispering sin in his pocket.

Chapter End Notes

thoughts? opinions? feelings?
haha love you guys lots <3

a perfect fit

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Unsteady by X Ambassadors

Someone was choking him.

Jimin pushed and scratched and clawed at those hands. Hands wrapped around his neck.

No air. No air. No air.

Breathe, he needed to breathe and he couldn't breathe.

Black eyes, dark. So dark.

"Min-ah."

Jimin's eyes shot wide, his mouth open and gasping, cold sweat slathered across his skin. Tremors wracked his body as he stared up at the ceiling, frozen. Couldn't move. Couldn't move except to shiver and shake. And he still felt those phantom hands clawing at his throat, still felt Minwo choking him out.

"Fuck, you're so fucking slutty for me, aren't you?"

Choking, choking, choking.

"Min-ah, stop freezing up."

Minwo smacked him, red print burning across Jimin's cheek. Jimin blinked, tears burning his eyes as he was bombarded with images of his father. His father throwing him against the wall, skull slamming into drywall.

Minwo started fucking him harder, Jimin's legs thrown over his shoulders, holding him in place by his throat. Let up a little to let Jimin gasp in breaths of oxygen before cutting it off again completely.

Arms around him, panicked voice close to his ear.

Jimin gagged, trying to get away. Hands were then handcuffed to the headboard. Couldn't escape, couldn't breathe.

"Jimin? What's wrong?" A hand on the side of his face, gentle as the person turned his head.

"Come on, Min-ah. Fucking get over it. Just-"

Gagging and gagging, trying to suck in air.

"Damn it, stop moving-"

"Jimin?"

“Min-ah-”

Jimin had night terrors.

Jungkook found that out the hard way when he woke up to Jimin’s foot kicking into his gut. He’d brought Jimin what had become a nightly cup of water, accidentally falling asleep next to him on the couch. It must’ve been early morning when it happened, the sun not even threatening the sky yet.

He found he couldn’t really do anything to wake Jimin up or pull him out of it, not even when Jimin started clawing at his arm. So he just held Jimin, held him as he shook and trembled and gasped. Held him no matter how long Jimin seemed to remain in his dazed, confused state after the terror passed.

Jungkook knew, after all. He knew how it felt to wake up and not remember where you were. To go back to a haunting darkness that seemed to suck you in, refuse to let go. He knew. So he did what his hyungs had done for him. Eventually lulled Jimin back to sleep, tucking him in when his breathing evened, his eyes fluttering with sleep.

Jungkook went upstairs to change into a long-sleeved shirt. Didn’t want Jimin asking, feeling bad about the scratches. And maybe he should’ve stayed in his own bed, should’ve gone to sleep.

But he went back downstairs and slept on the couch next to Jimin.

Jimin didn’t mean to answer one of Minwo’s calls from Jungkook’s phone. He didn’t mean to do anything. But the constant alerts popping up on the cell from a blocked caller… it was Jimin’s old number, and he knew it was Minwo.

Jungkook was asleep on the couch beside him, snoring softly with the angle of his head tilted back. And Jimin couldn’t help himself, answered a call just to hear Minwo’s voice again. Just to see if anything had changed. Because he missed Minwo so much, a huge chunk of his life gaping and bare since he’d left.

But Jimin didn’t say anything, only listened. Listened to actual cries and sniffles on the other end, begging and pleading.

“Jungkook, I need to know where he is. I need to know if he’s okay.”

Jimin pressed the phone harder into his ear, legs curled up to his chest, forehead resting on his knees.

“I don’t know what you told him, but he needs me. He’s lost without me. Please, Jungkook. Please. I love him. I don’t know what he’s thinking right now, but he’s obviously not in a right state of mind.”

Jimin thumped his forehead against his kneecaps, a little too hard. His heart quivered hearing Minwo’s voice, his mind begging him to go back. To make things right. To stop being a coward, stop running.

“Jungkook, I know you’re listening. I know you unblocked this call. Please… Jimin is my everything… I just need to know he’s okay… if he’s safe… if he’s eating well… he doesn’t eat when he’s stressed...”

Jimin thought he would’ve cried, thought tears would be streaming down his face like drops of pearl laced with poisonous love, leaking from his soul, traitor to his heart. But there was nothing after a moment of listening, the quiver in his heart dissipating just as fast as it’d hit him.

Only a cold numbness was left: a hollow, empty, positively shredding numbness that ate at his chest. Expanded through his lungs until everything hurt so bad with the stretch.

“I just need to know he’s okay… He needs to know I love him… he’s… he’s not thinking straight… I love him…”

Jimin hung up.

Eyes wide and breath fast, his fingers trembled so hard the phone fell to the ground. Wondered if Minwo really meant it. If he missed Jimin. If Jimin really wasn’t thinking straight…

Jungkook’s light snoring stopped as he shifted a little on the couch, licking his lips, turning to the other side. Jimin couldn’t help but watch him, wondering if Jungkook was having a hard time with all of this. Minwo wasn’t exactly Jungkook’s favorite person, and Jimin knew it must be some sort of hell to keep his enemy’s ex-lover in his house.

And Jungkook apparently didn’t sleep well, because he’d come down every night since that first to get Jimin a glass of water, always claiming he couldn’t sleep. And even though some nights Jimin wouldn’t even look at him, wouldn’t even take it, Jungkook would set the cup on the coffee table anyways. A persistent presence, not pushy or demanding or forceful. Just *there.*

Jimin was too scared to say it out loud, but he really appreciated it.

Jungkook was awake when Jimin looked to him again, head lolling up, blinking dazedly. But when his eyes landed on his phone on the ground, Jimin’s pale face and sweat-slicked skin, he suddenly looked a lot more awake.

“Jimin?”

Jimin shook his head, burying his face in his knees once more. He heard the faint rustle of Jungkook moving on the couch cushions, probably stretching by the popping joints he heard. And then, the sound of plastic scraping along hardwood as Jungkook picked up his phone.

A pause, then, “Did you… did you answer one of his calls?”

Jimin focused on the heartbeat in his chest, the icy blue sharpness that pounded through his veins. Roared in his ears. Drowned everything out. A storm, a whirlwind.

Faded shorts, blue jacket, pink hair.

“Hyung…”

Jimin turned his head to the side, peering over at Jungkook through the dim morning light pouring into the room. “I’m sorry.”

Jungkook sighed, innocent doe eyes puffy with sleep, hair sticking up like it always did in the morning. But he was shaking his head, awkwardly scooting a little closer to Jimin on the couch.

Placed a tentative hand on Jimin's shoulder. "Are you okay?"

Jimin hated kind people.

He hated how selfless and open they were, how concern bled into everything they did. He hated how Jungkook had one of the kindest, purest hearts Jimin had ever come across. Even when Jungkook had hated him for being Minwo's lover, the maknae had still taken him in from a storm, still offered him refuge and assurance.

"Why don't you hate me?"

Jungkook's eyes flitted over Jimin's face, remaining passive and neutral at the question. "I just don't." Pure honesty.

"You should."

Jungkook shook his head, no hate whatsoever in those beautiful brown eyes. "I don't."

And it was almost like Jungkook had never caught Jimin and Minwo fucking in the courthouse. Like there were never any bad feelings between them after all that'd happened.

"Okay," Jimin mumbled.

"Are you… are you okay?"

Jimin just nodded.

Jungkook was quiet for a moment before he seemed to realize Jimin didn't want to talk about it. Stretched his neck side to side, groaning as he shook his bangs out of his eyes. While Jungkook was still waking up, Jimin bent over, grabbing up his backpack.

He dug through wrinkled clothes, avoiding bending the pictures he'd shoved in the bag. He pulled out the CD player Yoongi had stolen from Jungkook's room, the disc inside filled with Yoongi's-- Agust D's-- songs.

While Jungkook had unwittingly donated his CD player, Yoongi had given up a pair of old headphones for Jimin to use. Jimin slipped the headphones on, pressing play as Jungkook got up from the couch, shuffling over into the kitchen, still stretching from his awkward sleeping position on the couch.

Mood: The Last by Agust D

The first few bars of Suga's song started, and Jimin's mind was immediately pounding along with it, the lyrics speaking his soul. He'd been using the music to help drown out his memories of Minwo. Memories that were like pits of tar sucking at his energy, sticky and dark and unwelcome.

At times I'm scared of myself, too

Thanks to the depression that takes over me

And all my self hatred

Min Yoongi is dead already (I killed him)

Comparing my dead passion with others

It's now a part of my daily life

And this whole damn thing was his own fault. And Jimin hated himself immensely for it. Sometimes wished he could slit his soul's throat and pull out all that light, press it between his ribs, give it a good place to stay. Away from his wrecked heart. Away from his wrecked mind.

Shit, shit, I got it so stop it

I'm the root of all this so I'll stop myself

If my misfortune is your happiness

I'll happily stay unfortunate

If I'm the figure of hate

I'll get on the guillotine

So he was grasping and clawing at the lyrics when Jungkook sat next to him again, offering him a bowl of something. Oatmeal without any sugar. Plain: just how Jimin liked it.

Jimin's eyes rose to Jungkook's, saw the silent pleading in the maknae's gaze. Because Jimin hadn't really been eating much lately, hadn't been too hungry. Hadn't been working out, so he didn't want to gain weight by eating too much.

Jimin set the CD player to the side, music still pouring through the headphones, and picked up the bowl of oatmeal, staring at it with a turning stomach. He wasn't too hungry, but the look Jungkook was giving him had Jimin picking up the spoon, stirring it around. Started eating it, the gooey oats like slime on his tongue, mud in his throat. But he persisted.

Jungkook seemed content with that, and they sat there in the silence of the morning, eating oatmeal together. And the maknae kept glancing at Jimin as if he wanted to say something, wanted to ask about the phone call… maybe about something else, too.

Eventually, Taehyung came downstairs, and Jimin had noticed Tae was even less of a morning person than Jungkook. The other 95'er had wet hair from a shower and squinted eyes that were filled with an odd mixture of sleep and alertness, a towel wrapped over his shoulders.

Tae immediately made his way over to Jungkook, swatting the maknae's arm to the side as he sat on Jungkook's thigh. Jungkook huffed, but didn't say anything, only reached around Tae to continue eating. But then Tae was taking the spoon right from Jungkook's hand, boundary-testing smile on his face.

Tae started eating Jungkook's oatmeal.

And Jungkook, after a roll of the eyes, didn't seem to care anymore. He reached up, curling his fingers through Tae's light brown locks at the nape of his neck, affectionate and comforting. Wasn't angry, not at all. Didn't even look the slightest bit irritated.

Jimin missed Jihyun.

“Jimin-ah,” Tae started after swallowing down a bite of oatmeal, Jungkook stealing the spoon back. Jimin pulled a headphone back from his ear to hear Tae better. “Me and Namjoon-hyung are going on a morning walk. Do you wanna come?”

Jimin blinked at Tae, trying to process the invitation. A morning walk with that Namjoon guy, and Tae wanted Jimin to come along. He wondered why the other 95’er was offering, if Yoongi or Jin or Jungkook had convinced him to try and get Jimin off the couch.

“A walk?” Jimin asked.

Tae hummed in affirmation. “We just walk around a few blocks, sometimes go to a park. On rare mornings we hike this mountain in order to see the sunrise, but usually it’s still too cold around this time of year.”

Jimin’s eyes skirted over to Jungkook, who had given up on his oatmeal and had his arms wrapped around Tae’s waist, securing him in place. “You’d like Namjoon,” was all Jungkook offered.

“I don’t know,” Jimin muttered, picking at a thread on the bright yellow blanket pooled in his lap.

“You don’t have to come this morning, then. Just think about it?”

Too many kind people in this house. Jimin wasn’t used to it. But he nodded anyways, still feeling a little too overwhelmed to take Tae up on his offer.

When Tae and Jungkook had finished their shared bowl of oatmeal, and Jimin had gotten halfway through his before refusing to take another bite, Tae took their bowls and headed over into the kitchen. Pulled out his phone, began reading some sort of comic as he absentmindedly began making himself some toast.

Jimin pulled the bright yellow blanket further around himself, looking down at his opened backpack sitting on the floor. Because that was his life, that little backpack. It all fit into a tiny little bag Jimin could carry around.

Jungkook was staring at it, too. “Is that the picture from the living room?”

Jimin’s brows rose, gaze settling on the corner of his picture peeking up from behind a wrinkled shirt. He reached down, pulling it out. He honestly didn’t know why he’d grabbed it. It’d been a last-minute, split-second decision. Maybe it was because he didn’t want Minwo to keep it. Or maybe because this picture… Hoseok had taken this picture.

They’d been goofing around with a polaroid camera Hoseok had gotten Jimin for his birthday right after they’d gotten into high school. Polaroids had quickly become one of Jimin’s favorite hobbies, filling up a few photo albums with pictures of Hoseok and Jihyun and some of his other friends, even a few of Tony.

But this picture, this picture was special because it was the first one the camera had taken, and Hoseok had insisted it be of Jimin. But looking at it now, it only made Jimin’s heart hurt. Only made him think of all those polaroids he’d left with Hoseok, hundreds of memories pressed into the pages of a book.

He could hardly bare to look at it, much less hold it. So he shoved it in Jungkook’s direction. Jungkook gently took the polaroid from Jimin, holding it carefully in his hands, looking at it with the same curiosity he always had.

“Why are you so interested in that picture?” Jimin found himself asking.

Jungkook was still staring down at it, the eyes of a professional photographer studying every little detail. Every angle and shadow and emotion. “You look so happy in it,” Jungkook murmured softly. “I’ve never seen you like this,” he admitted, motioning to the picture.

And it was like a train rammed into Jimin’s chest, the breath whooshed out of him, his lungs caving in. He gripped the blanket in white, bloodless hands, holding onto the yellow of it for the fact that it was something bright and happy.

“I mean, I’ve seen you smile and laugh and stuff… but not like this. You must really love whoever took this picture.”

Jimin felt wobbly and upside-down and inside-out. Felt like his bones had been cracked up and patched together with grief and misery and a gut-wrenching longing.

“I like it. Happiness suits you.”

And then tears were splashing down Jimin’s face, and he felt so pathetic for always crying so much in front of Jungkook. But he couldn’t help it. Not when he missed Hoseok so much. Not when he realized he hadn’t been truly happy since he’d run away from his best friend. When he realized he was completely incomplete without Hoseok in his life.

“Shit, I’m sorry,” Jungkook was panicking, quickly setting the photo face down on the coffee table. His hands hovered near Jimin’s trembling frame, awkward and unsure.

“Jungkook,” Jimin practically sobbed out between flashing memories of Hoseok. “Can I borrow your phone? Please?”

Jungkook’s brows furrowed, lips a thin line. “Minwo?”

But the look on Jungkook’s face… the maknae would let Jimin call Minwo, even if it would ruin the both of them. He’d let Jimin do that, and Jimin saw that in his eyes.

Jimin shook his head. “No. No, not him. Hoseok. I need Hoseok.”

Jungkook’s eyes widened and he immediately unlocked his phone, scrolling through his contacts and handing it over once Hoseok’s name was selected. All Jimin had to do was press dial. And Jimin didn’t have to thank Jungkook, because the maknae was already standing from the couch with an encouraging smile before making his way over to Tae, who was staring at them with nothing short of confusion.

Jimin waited until Jungkook and Tae were gone, phone clutched tightly in his hand. But this time, even as blocked calls from Minwo popped up once or twice, Jimin swiped them away.

He pressed dial.

Hoseok picked up after a few rings.

Jungkook held the picture of Jimin in his hands, some strange attachment to it fluttering to life inside his chest. He’d always ~~loved~~ been intrigued by this picture, but it wasn’t until Jimin had started crying at his words that he realized there *was* an importance behind it.

Jungkook had been telling the truth about Jimin being happy in the photo, as stupid as it'd been to say something like that when Jimin wasn't doing too great. But seeing something snap in Jimin's gaze, asking to call Hoseok, Jungkook supposed it was worth it.

So he held that photo in his hands, knowing he should've asked to take it. But Jimin hadn't stopped him, had seen him and hadn't looked hesitant at all. In all honesty, Jimin had looked relieved to see Jungkook swipe up the photo, taking it away.

Jungkook was staring at his album, one of the unfilled ones that he hadn't touched in a little over a year. He slid the polaroid into an empty slot, right next to a picture of himself and Jin, arms wrapped around each other's necks.

It fit perfectly.

And that scared Jungkook more than he'd ever been willing to admit.

Minwo clutched Jimin's black flip phone in his hand, so hard the plastic cracked. Because that Jeon fucker had picked up, and even though Minwo hadn't known where Jungkook lived, he did now.

He traced the call, sharp eyes stinging with tears as his lip quivered with fury. Because Jimin was *his* and Jimin wouldn't run away, not from him. Jimin always came back, and it'd been two weeks now. Two weeks.

It was unacceptable.

He closed his laptop with a harsh clack, trying a few more times to call Jungkook, trying to get through to Jimin. Just wanted to talk. But apparently talking over the phone wouldn't be enough.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for the love <3

your choice

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Let's go to my place. I have some stuff of yours you should have back."

Jimin's brows rose at that, thinking Hoseok would've gotten rid of the boxes of stuff he'd left behind. When he'd disappeared with Minwo, he'd left almost everything. Minwo had told him to.

"You kept my stuff?"

Hoseok nodded, pulling himself up into the front seat of his car as Jimin took the passenger side. "I kept what I could, like the photos and your polaroid camera and some of your clothes." They both buckled up, seatbelts clicking as Hoseok started the car.

And it was thrilling to Jimin, thrilling to be with his best friend once more, to be going somewhere.

"I couldn't keep all of it, though," Hoseok continued. "I tried, but when I moved here from Incheon I didn't have a lot of space. I'm sorry."

"No, no," Jimin rushed to assure as Hoseok pulled out of Jungkook's driveway. "I didn't think… I honestly didn't think you'd keep any of it."

Hoseok spared Jimin a brief glance as he drove, staining hurt locked in his eyes. "You were-" He sucked in a breath. "You *are* a big part of my life, Jimin. I couldn't just throw you away…"

Jimin turned away from Hoseok to look out the window. Watched the buildings and budding trees blur past, his eyes unfocused. "Throw me away like I did to you?"

A sharp silence slit the air, overwhelming and underestimated. Jimin saw Hoseok's hands tighten around the steering wheel in his peripherals, and instantly knew he'd hit a nerve. That it still haunted Hoseok, even after their three-hour-long talk weeks ago.

Hoseok was biting his lip, staring straight ahead as he drove, stopping at stoplights, turning at others. He didn't say a word about Jimin's comment, and Jimin didn't say anything, either.

When they finally pulled up to an apartment complex on the other side of town, Hoseok pulled into a parking space and turned the car off. Opened his car door with a renewed smile as they headed towards the building, then up flights of stairs until Hoseok stopped in front of door number 424-B.

Hoseok's apartment was small and simple. It had a main living area with a kitchen and living room, and only one bedroom off to the side, a bathroom mirroring it. But it was cozy and homely and clean (Jimin had always been the messier of the two) and Jimin loved it.

Hoseok disappeared into the back bedroom, Jimin lingering in the living room, looking around a little. Waited for a minute as Hoseok came out with a medium sized box, Jimin's name scribbled on the side of it.

They spent the better part of the day going through Jimin's photo albums, sorting through some of his remaining clothes, looking through his memories. And Jimin was a little brighter for it, remembering all the good times.

Jimin ended snuggled up next to Hoseok on the couch, both of them buried in mountains of photographs and memories. Hoseok was explaining something about how *Hope on the Street* was going, and Jimin was thinking back to when they'd first started it, a tiny smile curving his lips.

"But it's not the same without you, Jiminie."

Jimin let the smile bloom fully across his face. "That's because there's no one there for you to swear at."

Hoseok rolled his eyes. "I don't swear-"

"When you teach? Yeah, right."

The dancer leaned back on the couch, cradling a stack of polaroids from their first dance rehearsal with *Hope on the Street.* "I'm nice with my swearing, though."

Jimin scoffed, flipping a page in his photo album. Bringing him to their first apartment together. It'd been a tiny, run-down thing in the backwaters of Incheon, with ugly grey carpets and yellow walls. But it'd been theirs, and they'd worked their asses off for it, having to support both an apartment and a dance studio.

"Do you remember that guy from next door?" Jimin asked, tracing the edges of a photo.

"The one who kept us up all night with his partying?" Hoseok shook his head, still pissed.

Jimin's smile turned mischievous. "But then you broke open a can of pepper spray in his apartment after a few months of asking him to stop."

Hoseok shrugged innocently. "I tried to reason with him. And besides, it was Yoongi's idea."

Yoongi. Jimin had forgotten those two would've known each other back then. Right after Jimin had quit *Hope on the Street* for Minwo. Right after everything started going downhill; when they'd stopped talking, stopped telling each other everything.

"I missed a lot, didn't I?" Jimin muttered, staring hard at a photo of him and Hoseok, arms slung around each other's necks as they posed for a selca.

"Jiminie~" Hoseok cooed. He leaned over and ruffled Jimin's hair affectionately, and Jimin let him. "I think there were a lot of things we didn't tell each other."

Jimin nodded, Hoseok's hand still threaded through his hair. Jimin leaned into the touch, craving any human contact-- any form of affection-- he could get. He hadn't had that for so long, not unless it was from Jungkook's hyungs. Or Minwo. But Minwo's touches had rarely been soft, rarely been affectionate or loving or forgiving.

"So, you and Yoongi?"

Hoseok's hand fell from Jimin's hair, going back to fiddling with the polaroids in his lap. A tiny blush dusted across the bridge of his nose and cheeks as he let out a light sigh. "Yoongi… he's a good guy."

Jimin nodded, waiting.

Hoseok scratched at the back of his neck, awkwardly avoiding Jimin's gaze. "It didn't work out."

"Oh," Jimin muttered, thinking back to how Yoongi blushed any time Hoseok was even remotely

mentioned. Thought about how Tae and Jungkook teased the rapper at any given opportunity. And now, how Hoseok was blushing, and Jimin hadn't seen him like this in so long, not since high school.

Hoseok loosed a breath between his teeth, carefully shrugging his shoulders. "It wasn't him. It was… It was me." The dancer played with a polaroid in his hand, turning it over and over, again and again. "We went out a few times… on dates… and hung out a lot more than that, usually when I went to visit Jungkook at GCF."

There was a brief pause. "What happened? With Yoongi?"

Hoseok's sigh was shuddering this time, and he was looking away completely, the golden light of the lamp casting a warm glow across his flawless skin. "I broke it off after you disappeared."

Oh.

Oh.

A rush of guilt slammed between Jimin's ribs, right up into his heart like a paralyzing knife. He clutched a little at his chest, absentmindedly rubbing at the spot where all the pain was. And he knew he'd apologized about a million times at this point, but he couldn't stop the words from leaving his lips again.

"I'm sorry."

And some wounds, some wounds took longer to heal than other ones. And Jimin needed to remember that, especially as Hoseok's eyes danced with pain once more. They'd been inseparable for the seven years they'd lived together. They'd been soulmates.

It wasn't easy being severed from half of your soul.

"Jimin-ah… we'll figure it out," Hoseok murmured, seemingly to himself. "We'll figure it out."

They still had a long ways to go. Jimin had hurt Hoseok too much to simply forget what had happened. But they'd get there; they'd get there eventually. And for now, this is what Jimin needed, so he was happy.

When Jungkook opened the front door, he was expecting to see Jimin and Hoseok. He was expecting to see them holding hands and hugging and crying like they had weeks ago. But it wasn't Hoseok standing on the porch, and it definitely wasn't Jimin.

"Where is he?"

Staring at Minwo with wide eyes and a dropped jaw, Jungkook also supposed he'd been expecting a furious, swearing, ready-to-punch-Jungkook-in-the-face Minwo. But the man standing on his porch was a broken one.

Bloodshot eyes, dark circles, whiskery scruff along his jaw. Minwo had never looked more lost, more fallen apart. But neither had Jimin, and Jungkook forced himself to remember Jimin's freezing body standing in a snowstorm, standing in the very same spot Minwo was in now. Forced himself to remember the bruises splashed purple and red into Jimin's skin. The way Jimin had hunched over the toilet bowl, violently rejecting the air in his stomach.

“What are you doing here?”

Minwo’s hands clenched into weak fists at his sides, eyes wandering past Jungkook’s frame to the inside of the house. Trying to spot Jimin. But Jimin was with Hoseok, and Jungkook had never wished so badly for Jimin to stay away.

“Where is he?” Minwo asked again.

Jungkook's features sharpened into a purely lethal glare, edging the door more closed so that Minwo couldn't see into the house. "He's not here. He's gone."

Minwo shook his head, tears simmering hot, splashing down his face. "He has to be here. I know him, and I know he's fucking here."

Jungkook heard the TV pause, Jin's videogames suddenly silent. Yoongi was in the kitchen, and Jungkook held onto the fact that he had his hyungs just behind him as he met Minwo's hard gaze head on. "You need to leave."

Minwo planted a large hand on the door, pushing a little, though not enough to actually try and get in. "Jungkook, I need to see him. I need to talk to him."

A surge of hatred flared in Jungkook's chest and he shoved at the door, making Minwo stumble back a step. "Leave him alone. Leave me alone. You shouldn't even be here; I could use this in court."

Minwo's eyes widened for a fraction of a second. He heaved a deep breath, shaking and hurt. "I need to know he's okay."

"He's not here."

"Please, Jungkook."

"Leave."

"Jungkook-"

"No. You don't get to come knocking on my door. Not after what you did. Leave me the fuck alone, and leave Jimin the fuck alone."

Minwo ran a hand through greasy strands of black hair, shaking his head again and again. "No, no. I need him. Where is he?"

There were hands on Jungkook's shoulders, and the maknae almost thought it was Minwo for a second, that somehow Minwo had edged in behind him and it was an illusion standing on his porch. But then Jin was pulling Jungkook back from the doorway, pushing in front of him to face Minwo.

"You need to leave." Jin's voice was pure winter, filled with a protective cold that chilled Jungkook to his bones.

Sometimes Jungkook forgot about this side of his hyung.

"I need to see Jimin," Minwo persisted desperately.

"Leave right now or I'll call the police."

Yoongi was suddenly pushing in front of Jungkook, too. Forced Jungkook to take a step back into the house, away from Minwo. And if Jin was intimidating when he was angry, Yoongi was downright terrifying.

Minwo's eyes flitted between the three of them, gaze still wandering behind the human barrier to peer back into the house. But he couldn't see Jimin's backpack; Jungkook made sure to stand right in Minwo's line of sight to keep it hidden.

The man on the porch seemed to give up, then... at least for now. Because his face hardened, his eyes deadly and dark. And Jungkook had only seen this side of Minwo in the video, fist slamming down into Jimin over and over. But just as quickly as the darkness in Minwo's gaze rose, it fell, leaving a broken shell of a man once more.

"Tell him I want to talk to him."

"He's not here and it's time for you to fucking leave," Yoongi growled.

"He'll come back to me," Minwo whispered, nodding to himself.

"Fuck off," Yoongi snapped, taking a step forward.

Minwo seemed to realize the danger he was now in, because he was backing away, down a few steps. Wild eyes locked on Jungkook. Bitter laugh fell from cruel lips. "You think you can fuck him, too? Think you have his heart?"

Jin's hands were clamped around Yoongi's shoulders to keep him from surging forward.

"You don't know him like I do," Minwo continued. "He'll run from you, too. He'll lie and lie and then he'll run; that's what he always does. Ask Hoseok. Ask Jihyun. Ask anyone."

Jungkook was staring right back at Minwo, keeping his gaze. He knew Jimin wasn't perfect, knew he'd lied about stuff before. Had kept his relationship with Minwo hidden from Jungkook for a year and a half. But in a way, he also understood more where Jimin was coming from now, understood Jimin wouldn't do those things unless he didn't have a choice.

"I'm calling the police," Jin announced, already pulling out his phone.

"Don't bother," Minwo laughed, already turning and starting to walk down the steps. "I'm leaving." He cast one last look at Jungkook over his shoulder, smiling like a cheshire cat. "And don't worry, Jungkook-ssi. He'll come back to me. You'll wake up one morning and he'll be gone, and he'll be back in my arms. You can fuck him all you like, but he'll always be mine."

Before Jungkook could think of anything to actually say, Yoongi was stepping back inside, slamming the door shut and locking it.

A suffocating silence engulfed the room. But Jungkook didn't care; he was staring at the door, Minwo's words slamming into his head. Couldn't stop thinking about the absolute certainty in Minwo's voice. That Jimin was lying, that he'd run.

"Why does Minwo want to see Jimin?" Jin asked.

Jungkook's wide eyes shifted over to his oldest hyung.

Yoongi crossed his arms over his stomach, still fuming rage. It was a silent sort of fury, one that slit your throat quietly. "Your choice to tell him," was all Yoongi offered through gritted teeth.

Jungkook nodded absently, glancing over at Jimin's little bag of stuff on the floor by the couch. And he knew it wasn't really something for him to explain, was up to Jimin, but Jin was staring at him with thick, smothering worry. Was staring at him, so lost and confused, a little scared even.

"Jimin… Jimin was Minwo's-" He choked on the word 'lover.' Knew if Jimin was there, he'd scold him. "Boyfriend."

Silence.

"What?" Jin's voice was quiet, shock laced through the air. He was blinking weird again, like he did when his contacts bothered him, and his ears were turning a little red.

Jungkook didn't know if Jin was upset that Minwo had found their house, or that Jimin had been dating the man. Whatever it was, Jin didn't look too happy, and Yoongi was still glaring at the front door as if Minwo would burst through it any second.

"Hyung," Jungkook murmured, and both his hyungs looked at him. "What do we do? He knows Jimin is here."

Jin was still helplessly trying to process the information, an unreadable expression on his face.

"Should I tell him Minwo came here?" Jungkook asked.

Yoongi shook his head. "He runs, right? If he doesn't feel safe here, he'll pack his bag and be gone by morning."

"Then we don't tell him? What if he isn't safe?"

Yoongi sighed, shaking his now black bangs out of his eyes. "He'll be safer here than out on the streets. He shouldn't go back to that."

Jungkook's brows rose a little. "How do you…"

"Jimin's told me a little about his childhood. Mainly how," Yoongi rubbed the back of his neck, the anger finally simmering down into bashfulness. "Mainly how he met Hoseok."

Normally Jungkook would be quick to tease Yoongi, but right now there was no lightness in the air. Minwo's presence had brought a panic, a reminder of all the court hearings, the comatose assistant. It was uncomfortable, with queasy lungs and ashy minds, darkness with no stars.

"Yah, could someone please explain more about what's going on?"

Jungkook looked to Jin. "I don't think I can."

Jin's gaze flitted between his two dongsaengs, arms hanging uselessly at his side. "I'm worried about you, Jungkook-ah. I'm worried about him hurting you."

"He won't hurt Jungkook, and he won't hurt Jimin," Yoongi cut in. His feline eyes were narrowed beneath his black bangs, and he looked about ready to murder someone.

"Why don't we call the police?" Jin asked. "Minwo has a restraining order against you and he just broke it."

But Jungkook was already shaking his head, fear trembling through his bones. Flashes of the assistant swung through his head on a broken chandelier, glittering and sharp with reality. Jewels the color of Jimin's bruises, singing as sweet and high as his cries of pain.

“Jungkook-ah,” Yoongi said, stepping forward and placing his hand on Jungkook’s shoulder. “Maybe we *should* call the police.”

Jungkook shook his head again and again. “What would the police think if we called saying Minwo was here if we have no proof?”

Yoongi and Jin were silent for a while, looking as though they wanted desperately to convince Jungkook otherwise. But Jungkook had a point. If they were to call the police about this, the media would be all over it, rekindling the slow-burning embers of the case into a wildfire.

Because Jimin being in Jungkook’s house would give Minwo a way to make something out of nothing. And as much as Jungkook… as much as he believed in Jimin, he didn’t know if Jimin would actually press charges against Minwo. Not if the shattered longing in those cool coffee eyes had anything to say.

But Jimin had to know. Had to know Minwo had found out where Jungkook lived. There had been too many lies between them these past two years. And perhaps he felt guilty about the USB. Perhaps it was the guilt, but he knew he would tell Jimin. Would accept it either way if Jimin ran or if he stayed.

He’d promised Jimin, after all. Promised Jimin he could leave whenever he wanted to. And so he told his hyungs just as much. And Jin, Jin was still confused as hell, and Tae was, too, when he walked in on the tense conversation.

“I’ll talk to Jimin. If he wants… if he wants to call the police, I’ll let him,” Jungkook decided, his hyungs surrounding him. Nausea curled through his gut at the thought of dealing with the police again, of ending up in prison.

“It’ll be his choice.”

Chapter End Notes

hopefully you liked this chapter <3

oh! and also, i might not post anything for a few days cause again, christmas stuff.
have happy holidays!

always be mine

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Jungkook-ah!" Jin called from downstairs.

Jungkook didn't move, ignoring his oldest hyung. He was typing out a text to Hoseok, asking when Jimin would be back. But then he kept erasing it, typing it out again over and over. Didn't want to come off as possessive or some shit like Minwo. But Jimin had been gone for three days now, and what if he'd ran?

What if Minwo had somehow found him?

"Yah, you brat! Stop ignoring me!"

Jungkook didn't even budge, staring down at the words.

Hey hyung is Jimin still with you?

He erased it, shaking his head. Erased it only to type out the very same sentence again. He stared at Hoseok's profile picture, thinking of how Jimin had cried for the dancer. How desperately they seemed to need each other. And something ugly in Jungkook's chest reared its head, still not liking the fact that Jimin had answered that call from Minwo.

His door opened, an offended Jin coming in. He set a package on the bed next to Jungkook, swatting him on the shoulder. "You brat. You can't call yourself my friend when you ignore me like that."

Jungkook finally just pressed send on the text, turning off his phone before his attention shifted to his hyung. "What's this?"

"I don't know, I assumed it was either yours or Yoongi's. You didn't order anything?"

Jungkook shook his head, eyeing the box next to him. It was small, taped up neatly, new. But there was no name on it. No return addresses or mailing labels. It was weird, and it didn't give Jungkook a good feeling.

Jin seemed to sense this, picking up the box carefully. Jungkook had gotten death threats before, but it had been months since anything had happened. Nobody really knew where the suspended CEO of Golden Closet Films lived after he'd moved out of his penthouse, and for a terrifying minute Jungkook felt his heart in his throat as both him and Jin stared at the box.

"Should I call the police?" Jin asked.

"No," Jungkook muttered. "We don't know what it is…"

He took the package from Jin, his phone forgotten on the bed, and turned it over gently, hearing something metal thump around inside. On the bottom of the package was a tiny piece of paper taped closed. Jungkook peeled the tape back, opening the note up.

You can fuck him all you like but he'll always be mine.

Jungkook paled, Minwo's voice in his head. And Jin was taking the note from his stiff hands,

asking what it said. It was typed in a neat little font, nothing to indicate who it might be from. But Jungkook knew. He knew who it was, snatched the note back when his brain caught up with him. Jin complained, but Jungkook was already grabbing the box. Bolted downstairs to the kitchen.

He fetched a steak knife and cut the box open, knowing Minwo wouldn't be stupid enough to send him a bomb or anything. And what was inside confused him. Because he wasn't sure what a pair of handcuffs should mean.

Was Minwo telling Jungkook he'd get arrested soon? Was that it? Or was it something for Jimin? Because the note had been addressing Jungkook, but the contents of the package...

"Handcuffs?" Jin asked, peering into the box.

The handcuffs themselves looked fairly new, but when Jungkook realized they were speckled with dried blood, his heart slammed down into his stomach.

"Is that blood?"

The front door opened just then, causing both Jin and Jungkook to jump in surprise. Yoongi was at BigHit and Tae was out with Namjoon for the afternoon and wouldn't be back for another hour. And Jungkook suddenly thought it might be Minwo, that he'd see those black eyes boring into his soul.

"We're back," Hoseok announced, the door swinging wide open. "Thanks for not locking it this time. You guys are hella slow answering the door."

Jimin was right behind him, cradling a medium sized box of stuff. Set his box down once he got inside, looking well rested and a little happy, too. His hair was black now, having dyed it back to his original color. It made him look sharper, not as soft. And Jungkook liked it, would've taken more time to really study Jimin if it wasn't for the handcuffs sitting in the suspicious box and the crumpled note in his pocket.



“What’s wrong?” Hoseok asked, Jimin shuffling in behind him and closing the door. “Did you not read my text?”

Jungkook shook his head, mind still reeling from the handcuffs sitting right in front of him.

“What’s that?” Jimin asked, motioning to the box on the counter, how Jin and Jungkook were both hovering over it with pale faces and panicked eyes.

Jungkook cleared his throat, glancing back down at the box. “It’s from Minwo.”

Jimin’s smile went slack, his eyes widening a little. And maybe it was the wrong thing to tell him that Minwo had dropped a package off, that his insane ex knew where he was… but Jimin deserved to know.

“He knows?” Jimin asked, and Jungkook saw bloody knuckles and bruised skin in his gaze. “He knows I’m here?”

Jungkook nodded slowly, breath broken in his lungs. “He, uh… he came by a few days ago. Said he wanted to talk to you.”

But Jimin was already shaking his head, folding his arms over his stomach, very aware of the hyungs surrounding him. “You all know?” He asked, voice too quiet, too small. Looking at the ground with nothing but shame in his soul.

Jin shifted from foot to foot, awkwardly reaching up, placing a hand on Jimin’s shoulder. “It’s okay, Jimin-ah. It’s… okay.”

Jimin still wouldn’t look up at any of them, not even at Jungkook. And Jungkook, that’s all he wanted. Just wanted to see that Jimin wouldn’t run, wouldn’t run back to Minwo, looking for

second chances. Didn't want that, and by the look on Hoseok's face, the dancer didn't want that, either.

"He sent this box?" Jimin asked, nodding at it.

It was quiet, quiet as Jimin eyed the box with something akin to fear and ice, slowly coming forward. He was standing right next to Jungkook now, their shoulders touching as he peered down at the contents of the package.

Jungkook watched as Jimin's gaze welded to the handcuffs, the little specks of smeared, dried blood. His cool coffee eyes were wide, dark lashes stark against his now pale face. His hands were shaking as he reached into the box, picking them up and cradling them in his hands.

He seemed lost in his own thoughts, his expression sealed off with iron gates, nothingness in his eyes. And that's what scared Jungkook more than anything. He'd been expecting a mental breakdown, had expected Jimin to break apart as he had behind the ice cream parlor. But Jimin was stone and mortar, deathly quiet, shut down.

Jungkook watched as Jimin cupped the handcuffs in the palms of his hands as though they were fragile, as if they'd shatter and fall apart. Watched as Jimin gently set them back down in the box, head ducked down as he turned around and left.

The bathroom door closed, lock clicking, and Jimin didn't come out for the rest of the day.

This scene was too familiar to Jimin. Too fucking familiar. And he couldn't help but hate himself for it, but he didn't want anyone to see his tears, hear his sobs.

He was in the shower, sitting on the floor sobbing as he was pelted by steaming hot water. It was too much. Too much for him. Seeing the handcuffs that'd been his personal torture, chaining him to that fucking punching bag for three weeks--

He focused on breathing.

In and out.

In and out.

In and out.

He tipped his head up, flinching a little as the scorching water stung his sensitive face, his eyelids, his lips. It was like drowning while still being able to breathe. It hurt a little. It was uncomfortable. But it was something that took his mind off of the package, the fact that Minwo knew where Jungkook lived.

He ran a hand through his wet, black hair, pushing it back from his forehead. Water was pooling at his ankles, his feet near the drain. He'd closed the drain plug on accident, and he watched as the water level slowly rose around him. And a steaming hot bath sounded like heaven right now. So he turned off the shower, letting the tub fill using the large tap.

His body cried out in relief as the water got inches from the top. He turned it off, lazily settling back into the water-- it was so hot it was hazy, murky. But it felt so good. So damn good. So he laid back, resting his head against the end of the tub, submerging himself to his nose and breathed

calmly so as not to stir the water.

His muscles were relaxing, easing with the stinging heat. His eyes drooped as steam curled up from the cloudy surface, the hum of the bathroom fan whirring in the back of his mind. He absentmindedly rubbed at his wrists, the ghost of the handcuffs straining him against the punching bag.

In and out.

In and out.

In and out.

Focus on something else.

He found himself drifting off after a while, eyes heavy, mind shredded. But he didn't try to fight it. Instead, he positioned the back of his skull to rest on the end of the tub, his entire head above water to make sure he didn't drown.

And he fell asleep.

Hayoon shifted beside Jungkook on his bed, the room dark and quiet. Jungkook knew she was sensitive when it came to violence and abuse. She'd always had too much heart for her own good, even though Yoongi was totally right about her being a bitch sometimes.

"I didn't… I didn't realize what it'd actually be like…"

Jungkook didn't say anything to that, thumbing at the USB drive in his hand. Sleek and black and deadly, it might as well be an obsidian blade he cradling between his fingers. "I can't get rid of it."

Hayoon was staring at that damn USB, too. "I know."

Because it really was a huge piece of evidence against Minwo. Massive. If the authorities and media saw the video, Minwo would be locked up for sure and hopefully investigated more thoroughly for the attack on the assistant. But Jungkook couldn't turn it over, not yet.

~~Didn't think he ever could.~~

There was a long stretch of silence, both of them drowning in their shared guilt. Hayoon feeling guilty for giving Jungkook the idea in the first place, and Jungkook for acting on it. But neither of them could speak any more about what they'd done, unable to find the words.

So Jungkook stood from the bed, making his way over to his dresser. He slipped the USB into the very back of the top drawer, not wanting to look at it any longer. Put it right next to the crumpled note with his faded phone number and the bloody handcuffs in a plastic bag. His little trove of physical guilt.

Guilt: a common word in Jungkook's vocabulary nowadays.

"I really am sorry, Kook."

Jungkook nodded, pushing the drawer back in and making his way back to the bed, sitting down and wrapping an arm around Hayoon's shoulder. She leaned her head into him, fidgeting with a

ring on her thumb. What they both needed was a distraction, and Jungkook didn't think twice before leaning down and planting a kiss on top of her head.

She tilted her head up, meeting his lips. They sat there kissing for a while, Jungkook's mind still ringing with both the bloody handcuffs and the USB. So he kissed her hard, with tongue and teeth and soft moans. Cupped her face between his warm hands, smoothing her long black hair back.

Hayoon pulled back from the kiss first, lips swollen with kisses, and she laid back on Jungkook's bed. Pulled on his arm. Jungkook obliged, following her down and straddling her hips. Started tugging at the hem of her shirt.

She needed this just as much as him, the distraction.

"I heard she's making some progress," Jungkook murmured as he kissed his way over her collarbone.

Hayoon responded by threading her hands through his hair, urging him to kiss rougher. And he did. Blocked out the thoughts in his mind as he continued his trail of wet, searing kisses down her flat stomach.

He forgot. For a moment, he forgot. Forgot to forget about Jimin. Because Jimin was still in the bathroom downstairs, had been for hours. Had refused to come out even when Hoseok announced he was heading home. And as Jungkook tugged at the waistband of Hayoon's pants, he couldn't help the image of Jimin prickling through his body.

Jimin's soft black hair and smooth skin, his eye smile and full-bodied laugh. Couldn't help but think about Jimin as he licked a stripe up Hayoon's inner thigh. Her thighs were smaller than Jimin's, not as muscular. But Jungkook thought about it anyways, what it would be like to pepper Jimin's thighs with hickeys and kisses. To worship him in the way he was meant to be worshipped.

With everything that was going on, with the obvious pain Jimin was in, it was wrong. Wrong to think of Jimin during a moment like this. It was wrong it was wrong it was wrong it was wrong--and why the hell was he even thinking about that? His little crush had gone away long ago, disappeared the night in the courthouse.

It was wrong; it was wrong, and if Jungkook couldn't stop thinking about Jimin, he couldn't do this anymore. Couldn't. Not when Jimin was tattooed to the forefront of his mind, when those feelings had long since been buried, when he shouldn't fucking feel any of that for Jimin anymore.

Jimin didn't deserve that and neither did Hayoon. So he pulled away, pulled up, eyes shut tight and head hung in defeat. Propped up over Hayoon's slim figure, desperate for anything he could grasp onto. Anything at all,

"Jungkook?" Hayoon questioned softly.

There was a quiet knock on the door just then. He froze, heart spiking because he knew it could only be one person. Only Jimin knocked in this house. And that meant Jimin had something to say. And Jungkook could only think the worst, only think about how Jimin could be coming to say goodbye.

Jungkook looked up at Hayoon with wide eyes, seeing the panic in her own. He lifted a blanket and wrapped it over her so that she was covered. Carefully stood from the bed, nearing the door, throwing one last warning look at Hayoon before opening it.

Jimin was in a dark grey hoodie, the hood up to hide his messy black hair, his thick-framed glasses

perched on his nose. He was clutching a binder to his chest, looking pale and hesitant and exhausted.

“Jimin?”

“I… I was just thinking… I don’t know, you seemed… you seemed interested in that other picture, so I figured…” Jimin huffed out a breath, pushing his hood back and running his hand through his hair. “Sorry, is now a good time?”

Jungkook realized he’d opened the door a bit wider, Hayoon just visible. She had slipped on her shirt and was staring at Jimin like he was a ghost, wringing her hands nervously. Jimin was staring at her, too. Eyes travelled back to the shirtless Jungkook standing in the doorway.

Jungkook knew it was blatantly obvious what they’d been doing. And yet, something in his chest twisted sharply at the shock on Jimin’s face, the sudden crashing of realization. But before Jungkook could even think of anything to say, Jimin was already stepping back, away from Jungkook’s room.

“I’ll… I’ll come back later… since you’re busy…”

“Wait,” Jungkook muttered.

Didn’t think twice before reaching out and grabbing Jimin’s arm. And months ago, Jimin would’ve reeled away in pain, clutching a bruise the size of a handprint. But this time Jimin only stopped, looking back at Jungkook a little abashedly.

~~Jimin didn’t flinch when Jungkook touched him.~~

“Jimin… are you okay?” Jungkook asked in a low murmur.

Jimin kept Jungkook’s gaze, his cheeks flushed as Hayoon shifted on the bed behind them, the sheets rustling. “I’m… yeah, I’m okay.”

Jungkook was awkward at best when it came to these types of things, but he was trying. “The handcuffs… do you want to talk about it?”

Jimin’s gaze locked with Jungkook’s, terrifyingly observant. And he was quiet, so quiet for a moment Jungkook thought he’d simply pull away and disappear into the bathroom once more. But Jimin didn’t budge, didn’t even shrug off Jungkook’s light, gentle grip on his arm. His eyes slid back to Hayoon, though, his hesitance returning full force.

“Later?” Jungkook prompted.

Jimin nodded slowly, clutching the binder a little tighter in his arms.

“And you’ll show me those, right?” Jungkook asked, a little smile on his lips.

Jimin nodded again, looking down at the binder in his hands. “If you want to see them.”

“I do,” Jungkook assured. He still felt a little awkward with Hayoon in his bed, Jimin standing in the doorway. Like two different worlds of his colliding. It was unsettling and wrong and disconcerting, but there was no reason it should be, right? It was just Hayoon. Just Jimin.

Jimin hummed a little before sucking in a breath, worrying his bottom lip between his teeth. He glanced back at Hayoon one more time, that same look of strange disappointment in his eyes as he

finally pulled away from Jungkook's touch. "Okay, then. I'll… I'll talk to you later."

Jungkook watched Jimin turn, descending the stairs with unsure footsteps. It was a relief to see Jimin out of the bathroom, to see he wasn't completely broken apart by whatever the handcuffs meant. To see he'd stayed, hadn't run. So Jungkook waited in the doorway, watching until the last sliver of Jimin's grey sweatshirt was out of sight downstairs before he finally turned back to Hayoon.

She was flushed with embarrassment, looking a little lost. Her eyes were wide and frozen on Jungkook, her hands shaking in her lap. Jungkook strode across the room and sat next to her on the bed, seeing that she'd put her clothes back on while Jimin had been out there.

"That was him?" She asked.

"Yeah."

"Jimin?"

Jungkook nodded.

"You… you really like him, don't you?"

It was Jungkook's turn to flush with embarrassment, a strange heat curling through his head, around his ears. "I don't-- I don't know… I mean, you know I used to… but I don't anymore. He's just… he's just my friend."

It was weird talking about this with Hayoon. They weren't in love, never had been. Only used each other for a distraction and nothing more. But they were still friends, and it was strange talking about him liking Jimin. If *liking* was even the word for whatever strangeness was going on between them.

"The way you looked at him," Hayoon clarified. "And the way you spoke. You're different with him."

Different with him than with me, Jungkook finished her sentence in his head. "He's… he's going through some shit right now…"

"You care about him a lot."

Jungkook didn't say anything, neither confirming nor denying.

Hayoon nodded a little numbly to herself, most likely thinking of the USB. "I don't think… I don't think we should hook up anymore."

Jungkook's chest prickled with something sharp, something uncomfortable. "What about your-"

"I'll be okay. I think it's time for me to find something else to distract myself anyways."

Jungkook hung his head, feeling guilty for a whole other reason now. "We're still friends, right?"

It was quiet for a moment, and then Hayoon's slim hands were cupping Jungkook's face, tilting his head up to meet her gaze. Her eyes were soft and thankful, and it settled a bit of the spike in Jungkook's chest. "Of course we're still friends, Kook."

Jungkook closed his eyes, leaning into her palm. "Even after everything with Minwo?"

Hayoon scooted closer, sitting hip to hip with Jungkook. “You’re innocent. I know you are. Nothing will ever change my mind about that.”

Jungkook wrapped his arms around Hayoon, pulling her into his chest. He knew it was for the best. Perhaps he’d known for a while now. She was right, and she seemed to understand something he himself didn’t quite realize yet.

“You should go talk to him… I need to get home soon,” Hayoon muttered, cheeks still rosy and warm.

Jungkook nodded a little blankly, staring at her. Leaned forward before he knew what he was doing and pecked her cheek, smoothing her hair back from her face. “Thank you.”

Hayoon’s blush deepened a little as she smacked his arm playfully. “Stop that, Jungkook-ah. You’re making me blush.”

Jungkook grinned before he stood from the bed. She was slipping on her shoes, grabbing for her purse, and Jungkook thought of all the shit they’d been through together.

He was grateful for Hayoon.

“Now go talk to him. He needs you.”

Chapter End Notes

... you already know i have no impulse control... and i have a lot more free time than i thought i would... so here's another chapter.
and thank you so much for all the sweet comments. they're so touching <3

no wings to fly

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was somewhere before midnight and Jimin was sipping at the glass of water Jungkook had brought him for the evening, nervously playing with the edge of the binder in his lap.

Jungkook was sitting next to him, warm and smelling of a fresh shower. The girl that'd been in Jungkook's bed-- Hayoon, he thought was her name-- had left shortly after Jimin had gone back downstairs. And Jimin couldn't help but feel a little bad knowing he'd ruined their moment.

~~Felt more than bad, felt something small and ugly seeing them together And that scared him. What if he was like Minwo, getting jealous over nothing? What if Minwo had turned him into a monster while they'd been together?~~

They'd spent the past two hours going through Jimin's polaroids. It was strange, sharing part of himself with Jungkook. But Jimin felt bad for storming off earlier, felt like he owed it to Jungkook to be at least a little open when the maknae was sharing his home without asking anything in return. And he also... he also wanted to share a little more of himself with Jungkook. Wanted to let him in.

And the way Jungkook looked at Jimin's photos, completely focused and genuinely interested, eyes sparkling with curiosity… it made something nice and warm soothe through his chest. Made him feel a little more relaxed, able to shove the handcuffs from his mind. Focus on something good for the time being.

"I like this one," Jungkook said, thumbing at the very last picture in the photo album.

It was a picture of Jimin and Hoseok, a blur of green and white behind them. Both were wearing striped shirts, Jimin's arms wrapped around Hoseok from behind, smiling and laughing. And Jimin remembered that day well. It was pressed into his mind, scribbled on golden leaf just like all the memories he had with Hoseok.



Jimin stared down at the photo as he suddenly said, "I think I'll go to Tony's tomorrow."

Jungkook looked up from the photo album, fingers still lightly tracing the picture. "Tony's? You

mean the frozen yogurt shop where you used to work?"

Jimin nodded. "It's been a couple weeks since I left Minwo... I feel like it's time for me to stop moping around... and get a job."

Jungkook shifted beside Jimin on the couch, a new wave of his shower scent filling Jimin's head. Mandarin oranges and… something like a forest? Cedar? It smelled clean and tangy and fresh, and Jimin found himself wanting to lean into the maknae, if only to get more of that scent.

"You don't have to rush into things," Jungkook assured him.

Jimin played with a loose thread on the bright yellow blanket pooled around his legs. "I haven't had a job in over a year. I think it's safe to say I'm not rushing into things at all."

Jungkook was quiet for a moment before he nodded to himself. "If that's what you want to do."

Jimin knew he shouldn't have felt shocked at Jungkook's words, at how easily the maknae gave in, but he was. With Minwo, it was never Jimin's choice. Always what Minwo wanted, and Minwo hadn't wanted Jimin to have a job. But Jungkook was leaving it entirely up to Jimin, even though Jimin was staying in his home, eating his food, cuddling with his hyungs.

It was Jimin's choice.

Jimin's.

Not Minwo's or Jungkook's or anybody else's but his own.

"The handcuffs," Jimin whispered. He hadn't been planning to tell Jungkook anything about them, but he felt something with Jungkook he hadn't felt in so long. Trust? This warm, safe feeling-- it was trust, right?

Jungkook stiffened a little beside him, head tilted towards Jimin, doe eyes weary. He was listening. Just listening. Jimin wrung his hands together, biting a shaky breath out of his lungs, pulling air back in. In and out. In and out. In and out. "That night-- that night when you saved me… after you left he, uh... he locked me in the basement gym."

slow burning agony

burning agony pulsing out

pulsing where he'd been hit

Jimin ran a hand through his black hair, silently pleading with his voice not to waver, not to give his hurt away. But he supposed it didn't matter anymore, did it? Jungkook had really only ever seen Jimin at his worst anyway.

"He used the handcuffs to…" Jimin stared at the big window across from him, the spring night outside pattering little flecks of rain against window every now and then. "He used them to punish me?" At the twitch of Jungkook's raised brow, the surprise on his face, Jimin was quick to amend his statement. "Not-- not like that… I'm not really into-- I'm not really into that stuff," Jimin flushed, embarrassed. "Well, I mean, I guess… I guess he was, but… I mean… fuck, this is so stupid."

Jimin curled a hand over the side of his face, trying to hide his blush from Jungkook. But the maknae just scooted a little closer, a little uneasy but a little more confident, too. He placed a

tentative hand on Jimin's back, rubbing up and down, palm warm through Jimin's sweater.

"It's not stupid."

Jimin nodded into his hand, still hiding a little. "He, uh… he was really mad … because he thought I was… I mean, I told him… I told him about how I went to your house a few times and stuff… and how I went out with Jihyun while he was gone…" Jimin couldn't look at Jungkook. Relied solely on the little seed of trust in his chest to keep going.

Fist. Four fingers, thumb tucked in. Knuckles white as they slammed down into Jimin over and over again.

"He thought you were cheating on him again? With me?"

Started seeing purple and black and white stars.

Jimin nodded slowly. "He was mad. And he used the handcuffs to… he handcuffed me to the punching bag--" Jungkook's hand froze on Jimin's back, yet Jimin still couldn't look at him. It was embarrassing, all the things he'd let Minwo do to him. It was just… *embarrassing.* "It was only for a couple days." Lies. "I don't know… is that… is that too much? Did I say too much?"

room spinning

spinning

twirling

upside down

Jimin ran a hand through his hair again, fingers threaded through soft black locks. Tugged a little at the roots, body reeling with such an overwhelming uncomfortableness that he wanted to flay it from his soul like a second skin.

"Did you call the police?" It was a soft question: gentle, not angry or judging at all.

Jimin shook his head. "I couldn't… I loved him."

Jungkook was silent beside him, and Jimin was cringing, thinking he'd said too much. And then Jungkook was standing up, walking over to the front door. Slipping his coat and shoes on. Jimin stared at him with a puzzled expression, bottom lip pushed out in a pout.

"Where are you going?" Jimin asked, panic seizing up in his chest.

"We're going for a drive."

Jimin blinked at Jungkook. "This late?"

Jungkook nodded, glancing down at his phone to check the time. "You look like you need some fresh air."

Jimin shifted awkwardly on the couch, finally closing the photo album in his lap. "Aren't you tired?"

Jungkook shook his head, smoothing his black bangs from his eyes. "You can't sleep and neither can I."

“Where are we going?”

Jungkook shrugged. “Wherever you want.”

They ended up walking around through downtown Seoul, Jungkook’s car parked in a lonely parking lot as they wandered. The sky was washed with light from the city, the cool spring air fresh in Jungkook’s lungs. He was walking beside Jimin, who was quiet still.

And the handcuffs. Jungkook felt Jimin’s words like a knife cutting down his spine. The thought of Jimin chained to a punching bag in a lonely basement gym made him want to do something entirely reckless. Made him want to hurt Minwo just how that bastard had hurt Jimin.

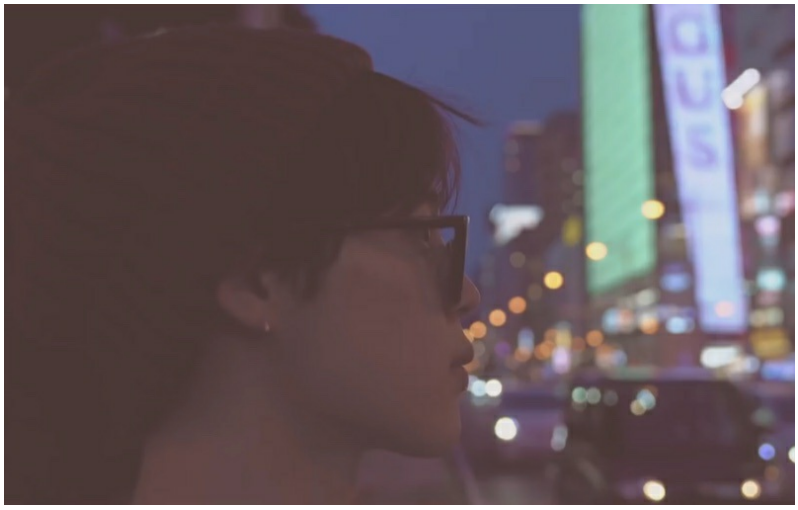
As they walked through the city, Jungkook glanced over at Jimin, studying him. Jimin had changed into a baggy, striped T with a long-sleeved black shirt beneath it. Was wearing black skinnies with a red beanie and those thick-framed glasses. Looked lovely and melancholic, like a winter ocean lapping at solemn white sand.

They didn’t talk much, just walked. Jimin got distracted a lot, wandering from window to window, surprised there were stores open this late in the heart of the city. Curious and wide-eyed and completely endearing.

And Jungkook couldn’t help himself, started snapping a few pictures with Jimin’s back turned or not paying attention. He’d wanted to photograph Jimin since the day they’d met in GCF, but he never had. And now he couldn’t stop himself.







Jimin caught him eventually, and Jungkook had blushed, looking down at his feet, stuttering to find an excuse. But Jimin had just laughed, the first time he'd smiled that whole evening. Hit Jungkook's shoulder playfully, body curling into the maknae's side with that full-bodied giggle of his.

"You'd better delete those," Jimin reprimanded.

Jungkook shook his head, sly smile tugging at his lips. "You look too good in them to delete."

Jimin had nothing to say about that, rolling his eyes and wandering onwards, the city lights sparkling around him.

It was somewhere around 3 in the morning when they ducked inside a little 24-hour convenience store. Jungkook bought them both ramen, and the cups of noodles warmed both their hands and their stomachs as they found a place to sit, looking out at the Han River.

The bridge was lit up, faint specks of a person here and there beneath the street lamps, the reflection of the bridge on the river wavering and smudged. The cityscape rose up behind the bridge, gorgeous and glittering with life.



Jungkook looked over at Jimin. He was cupping the styrofoam bowl in small hands, legs criss-crossed as he leaned forward, sipping at broth. The faint light from the bridge cast a soft glow over his face, the curve of his lips, the frames of his glasses.

Beautiful. Longing. Sad. A caged bird no longer, but with nowhere to go and with no wings to fly.

"Namjoon-hyung comes here a lot," Jungkook murmured finally. He'd been perfectly content to sit in the relaxing silence, but he wanted to talk to Jimin. Wanted Jimin to feel a little better than he had been these past few weeks.

Jimin was still staring ahead at the river, eyes tracing the flowing lights. "I haven't met him yet. Namjoon."

Jungkook let a small smile tug on his lips. "He's really philosophical. I think you'd like his music."

Jimin's head tilted to the side, so close to Jungkook's shoulder, so close to leaning on the maknae. "He makes music, too? Like Yoongi-hyung?"

Jungkook shifted just a bit closer. "He just released a mixtape called 'Mono.' I'm surprised you haven't heard it."

Jimin set the now-empty noodle cup on the ground in front of him, tucking his hands together between his legs to keep them warm. "I haven't heard a lot of new music in a while. Minwo didn't really like me listening to anything unless he approved it."

A swell of irritation rose in Jungkook's chest, but he bit it down, not wanting to make Jimin feel bad. However, he couldn't just let it go. "That's not okay. You know that, right? None of what he did to you was okay."

Jimin hummed, head ducking forward a little, picking at the grass beneath his feet. "I'm still… I'm still figuring that out…"

Jungkook didn't say anything, not when he could feel the confusion bleeding from Jimin into the air between them. And to Jungkook, it seemed simple. He thought if he was in a relationship like that he'd never let it get that far. But he didn't say that, didn't at all. Knew it'd happened to Yoongi, too. And Yoongi was one of the toughest people Jungkook had ever known.

Jungkook was cut off from his thoughts when Jimin finally leaned his head against the maknae's shoulder. Jungkook's eyes widened a little bit, his breath stuck in his throat as his body went stiff, unsure of what to do with himself.

Jimin started shaking after a minute, and Jungkook thought he was crying. He reached his arm up and around Jimin's shoulders, pulling him closer, not sure what to do. It was another moment before he realized Jimin was actually laughing.

"What?" Jungkook asked, suddenly embarassed.

"You're so stiff. Are you afraid I'm going to bite you or something?"

"No," Jungkook denied immediately, cheeks on fire. He tried to pull back a little, but Jimin pressed more into his side, burying his face in Jungkook's shoulder.

They sat there watching the Han River. Watched the lit up bridge and the clouds rolling over the city skyline, the stars peaking out every now and then. Sat there and watched, pressed together to keep warm. Peaceful and quiet and safe.

After a little while, Jungkook laid back on the ground, Jimin going down with him. Shifted a little to get more comfortable, resting his head partially on Jungkook's chest. The maknae's eyes were weighing heavy with sleepiness, and he looped an arm around Jimin, bringing him closer still, seeking warmth.

"Have you called Jihyun yet?" He asked sleepily.

"Not yet."

"Do you want to borrow my phone sometime?"

There was a pause. "I don't know if I should call him." Another pause. "I don't want to worry him."

Jungkook closed his eyes, sleep edging into his head. "I think…" He yawned. "I think you being with Minwo worried him a lot."

Jimin nuzzled more into his chest, taking a deep breath in. "I didn't tell him anything that would worry him."

"You didn't have to."

Jungkook's eyes slowly fluttered open, taking in the stars pinned up into the sky above them, visible through the pollution. It was a few minutes of gazing up at the sky before he turned his head, peering at Jimin through the corner of his eye.

Jimin was fast asleep, breathing faintly, full lips parted just the tiniest bit as he huffed out a soft breath. Looked so sad, even in his sleep. It made something in Jungkook's heart hurt seeing that lingering pain, the dark circles, the haunted eyes. But there was nothing he could do about it for now. For now, he held Jimin close, unsure what he was feeling or why.

And it wasn't long before Jungkook fell asleep, the sky already painted with the beginning blues of morning along the horizon.

The first thing Jimin noticed when he woke up was how cold it was. Not cold in a bone-chilling way, but in a biting way that made your limbs stiff and nose red. It was really bright, too, and the sound of lapping water woke Jimin up more than the cold or light did.

His eyes fluttered open, meeting an early morning sky. The sun was hidden behind a few clouds, the Han River spread out before him, a vein of glittering jewels catching the sky's light. People were mulling about, around the park and over the bridge, and Jimin instinctively pressed his face into the body beside his, looking for warmth.

Jungkook was still asleep, eyelids fluttering, face filled with such a beautiful peace and calm that Jimin couldn't help but smile a little. The maknae looked so innocent like this, always did in the mornings when he'd just woken up. But it was when Jungkook was still asleep that Jimin felt the most content.

He curled more into Jungkook's side, ignoring his creaking, groaning joints from his night spent sleeping on the hard ground. And he knew he should care more about the occasional onlooker passing by, especially since Jungkook wasn't a very loved public figure right now, but Jimin found he didn't care at all.

He felt safe. And he hadn't felt safe in so long, not like this.

"Good morning," a sleepy mumble came from above him.

Jimin shook his head, not wanting the moment to end just yet. But Jungkook was already shifting, already pushing to sit up. Jimin relented, untangling their legs and sitting up himself. His entire body was stiff, and by Jungkook's grumbled complaints, both of them were suffering.

Jungkook yawned, blinking sleepily as he looked over at Jimin. A tiny smile perked up his lips as he looked at Jimin, and Jimin shoved the warm feeling in his chest down as far as it could go.

"What time is it?" Jimin asked.

Jungkook patted at his jacket pockets, fishing out his phone. "8:34." And then the maknae's brows drew together, running a hand through his messy black hair. He started typing something out on his phone.

"What's wrong?"

It took Jungkook a second to respond. "GCF is holding a meeting in two weeks. They need me to be there."

"Is that bad?"

Jungkook nodded a little, his face draining of color. "I have a feeling I know what it's about."

Jimin didn't press anymore, instead looking up at the bright morning sky. They still had to walk all the way back to Jungkook's car, and if Jimin was going to ask Tony for his job back, they needed to get going. So Jimin stood up, helping Jungkook to his feet also. And they started walking, throwing away the empty ramen cups from last night as they went.

It was about an hour long walk, consisting of a comfortable silence and Jimin staying glued to Jungkook's side, even holding onto his arm now and then. And by the time they got back to Jungkook's house, it was almost 10. But neither of them made a move to get out of the car just yet, sitting in the driveway.

There was a long pause before Jimin cleared his throat, shifting a little in his seat. "Thank you. For last night."

Jungkook met his gaze, smiling that little smile again. "You're welcome."

And Jimin knew it was stupid, but he actually quite liked Jungkook’s smile. Felt warm and light and happy when Jungkook smiled just for him. But he’d never admit that outloud.

“Jungkook?” Jimin asked, voice meek and quiet.

“Yeah?”

Jimin stared down at his hands, playing with his fingers, rubbing at his palms. “I’m sorry.”

Jungkook’s eyebrows creased in concern. “For what?”

Jimin huffed out a breath. “I’m sorry for what I said that night in the courthouse. I’m sorry for all of it.”

“I, uh… I thought we put that behind us.”

Jimin nodded a little, still not looking at Jungkook. "I know. I just... I needed to apologize. I needed you to know that I didn't mean it." Jimin ran a hand through his hair, sighing. "Things like that... things like that can't just be forgotten, no matter what we've decided."

Jungkook was quiet, staring off into nowhere.

"I'm sorry, Jungkook. I don't... I don't hate you at all. I wasn't using you, and I'm sorry if it came off that way. I'm sorry I said those things... I have no excuses for what I said and what I did... and I'm sorry. I'm sorry for hurting you so much."

Jimin saw Jungkook hesitate out of the corner of his eye. Watched as the maknae bit his lip, thinking for a moment. And the quiet, it pulsed and ticked in Jimin's bones, crushed and tightened with the chance that Jungkook could leave, just leave. That the maknae might not say anything at all, might never forgive Jimin, never want to talk about it.

"I'm sorry for everything, too." And Jungkook, he was struggling. Jimin saw how he struggled to find the words he was looking for. "I'll forgive you... I'll forgive you if you'll forgive me for being so... being so..."

Jimin reached over, touching Jungkook's shoulder. Because it had been too many months of hurting, hurting each other and hurting themselves. They'd both done shit to each other, though Jimin thought he himself had done the most. But forgiveness, Jimin was learning what forgiveness meant. Was learning how to let go of guilt and anger and hurt. Learning to let it go.

"I forgive you."

Jungkook swallowed hard, his head dipping in a small nod. "Then I... I forgive you, too."

And Jimin felt it, felt it in his soul. How the world got a little brighter with that, a little less dark. The weight in his chest eased just the tiniest bit, his guilt not so heavy anymore. Because he could feel the sincerity, could feel that Jungkook meant it, that he really forgave him. And Jimin could breathe. He could fucking breathe; he realized he hadn't known what it was to breathe easy in too long.

“We’d better get inside," Jungkook suggested with a small, tired smile. "I forgot to text Yoongi-hyung about where we were.”

Jimin nodded, agreeing quickly. “He’s gonna be mad.”

Jungkook shrugged as he tucked his keys into his pocket, opening his car door. “I know.”

The phone rang a few times. Picked up after the fourth ring. *“Jungkook? What’s up?”*

Quiet.

Hesitance.

Deep breath.

“Hey, Hyunie.”

Chapter End Notes

thank you for the constant support and all of the love <3

blue and pink and white

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jimin was honestly surprised at how quickly Tony had given him his old job back. It had only taken walking in the front door of the shop for Tony to offer, Jimin not even having to ask. So he had started work the day after his morning waking up by the Han River, wrapped in Jungkook's arms.

He applied for other jobs, too, having worked multiple jobs at once his whole life. It was a struggle finding one that would work around his hours at Tony's, but he eventually found a job as a barista in a little 24-hour cafe a few days later. It was little farther walking distance, but he didn't mind that either.

He was happy to keep himself busy.

He left at about 6 in the morning, getting home close to midnight. The days were long, the breaks short. But he'd done enough lazing around in his past year with Minwo to last him a lifetime.

Minwo.

Jimin hadn't heard anything from him. Jungkook hadn't gotten any more blocked calls or messages, and it seemed that Minwo had dropped off the map ever since the package with the handcuffs. Jungkook had heard from Namjoon that Minwo was in Japan for a few weeks on vacation.

Jimin couldn't feel more relieved.

He still didn't sleep well. Still woke up most nights, not reeling from nightmares or anything, but unable to fall back asleep. Would lay awake for hours thinking about his weeks chained to that fucking punching bag. Would sometimes feel his body slamming into stairs, thrown out into a storm.

Hoseok had brought up therapy once. But Jimin didn't have the money for it. ~~Still felt too ashamed of what he'd done.~~ So he figured he'd just get over it on his own. And he sort of was. Was able to eat without thinking of protein drinks most days. Go into town without worrying about seeing Minwo around the next corner. Started dancing with Hoseok during what little off time he had, not afraid of music anymore.

And Jungkook.

Jimin refused to acknowledge the shift in their relationship ever since their night out by the Han River. Refused to think about how good it'd felt waking up in Jungkook's arms, safe and sound. Refused to think about the months Jungkook had gone to Jimin's old job at the coffee shop, always staying a little too long. Refused, refused because it was too dangerous.

Deep down, Jimin knew what the warmth in his chest was. That it was more than trust. Something more, something unsure, something scary. And so Jimin shoved it down, deep down. Buried it, buried everything.

Because after Minwo, he just *couldn't.*

Couldn’t think about how handsome Jungkook looked when he came back from dance practice with Hoseok, skin glistening with sweat, face a little flushed. How Jungkook was only able to crack open one eye for the first thirty minutes after waking up, a zombie in its truest form. How he still brought Jimin a glass of water every single night without fail.

He couldn’t think about it. Not yet, not when he was so shredded up, trying to stitch himself back together. Not when Jungkook was already in so much of a mess trying to deal with both Jimin living in his house and his company meeting coming up.

So Jimin shoved the thoughts away, focusing on his current task at hand: eating breakfast. He was sitting at the kitchen counter on a bar stool, idly thumbing through the newspaper Jin had started getting delivered to their house. It gave Jimin something to read while he ate his little bowl of unsweetened oatmeal.

Sometimes he’d catch something about GCF, about Jungkook, but it wasn’t very often. He searched for them anyways, thumbing through the pages as he shoveled the oatmeal into his mouth.

And as much as Jimin tried to ignore it, he also couldn’t help but feel that Jungkook’s downfall was his fault. Because if he had called the police any of the dozens of times Minwo had beaten him, his ex wouldn’t currently be at the head of Jungkook’s company.

If he’d had the courage when the police were questioning him about Minwo’s alibi, told them Minwo had possibly been gone for 4 hours the night of the assault, maybe it wouldn’t be Jungkook’s reputation that was ruthlessly slaughtered.

And so Jimin felt guilt like nothing else whenever he saw Jungkook staring blankly at nothingness, obviously thinking of his company: his creation, his dream, his passion. Thinking about the meeting coming up, a looming darkness trailing after the maknae like a second aura.

"Working today?" Jimin heard from somewhere in front of him.

He glanced up, gaze settling on Yoongi. And it was a goddamn miracle because *Yoongi* was awake at 5 am. "Yeah."

"I haven’t seen you around almost at all these past two weeks.”

Jimin hesitated, spooning absentmindedly at his cooling oatmeal. He'd specifically packed his schedule to the fullest, asking for the most amount of hours he could cram into one day. Didn’t want time to stop, time that would force him to think.

"You look exhausted," Yoongi pointed out.

Jimin shrugged, forcing a smile on his face. "I don't mind working so much. I like it."

"You're working, what? 16 hour days?"

A full nine at Tony's and another five at the coffee shop, with an hour in between and an hour to walk home after. "Yeah?"

Yoongi's brow rose a little as he began making himself some coffee, his feline eyes full of wariness. "You'll crash and burn at this rate."

Jimin licked his lips, following Yoongi's movements through the kitchen. "It's better than wallowing around, feeling miserable."

Yoongi pressed the button on the coffee machine, a thin black rope of coffee streaming down into a mug. "I think you already feel miserable and you're using work to cover it up."

Jimin flinched a little, appetite suddenly gone. "What are you, my therapist?"

"No," Yoongi sighed, pausing. "But I've been there before and I know what you're doing. I worked three jobs after my breakup."

Jimin sipped at his glass of water as the coffee machine beeped, trying not to let Yoongi's words affect him. "And you got past it, right? You covered the pain long enough for it to dull, and it all worked out in the end. You're here now, aren't you?"

Yoongi picked up his coffee mug, staring down at the swirling, steaming contents. "I got hit by a car. And then I was forced to deal with shit because I couldn't distract myself."

Jimin blinked, mind going blank. "Oh."

Yoongi sipped at his coffee. "I hurt my shoulder real bad and then I tried pretending everything was fine. Jungkook was actually the one to pull me out of it. Finally got me to go see a therapist."

Jimin thought he remembered some of this story from Yoongi's songs. Remembered the mention of a car and a therapist. And he didn't know what to say to that, didn't even know.

"You've gotta deal with your shit sometime. I'm not saying you have to do it now, but exhausting yourself like this is gonna hurt more than help."

Jimin was glad for the silence of the house, for the surety that everyone else was sleeping. Because as much as he'd grown to trust Jin and Tae and Jungkook, there was nobody who understood him like Yoongi did.

"Jiminie."

Jimin looked up at Yoongi, met his gaze head-on. "I just need more time. Let me do this for a little bit longer."

"It's your choice, Jimin-ah. It's your choice."

Jimin nodded a little, thinking again how odd it was that he could make his own decisions. "I know. I'll get there eventually."

Yoongi sighed, taking a long sip of coffee. "Hoseok's still worried about you, you know?"

Jimin's somber mood was cracked by Yoongi's words, and he thought perhaps Yoongi had done that on purpose. "You've been talking to Hoseok?"

Yoongi shrugged a little, refusing to meet Jimin's gaze. "Don't get any ideas. We're just friends."

Friends that were madly in love with each other.

"Wipe that smile off your face, Park Jimin."

Jimin hummed a little before grabbing up his backpack from the ground, his work uniforms and lunch inside. "I don't know what you're talking about, hyung."

Jimin got a grumbled reply, something he couldn't even make out, before Yoongi was turning away with his cup of coffee cradled in his hands. And Jimin watched him go back upstairs, waited

by the front door with a small smile on his face and a warmth in his chest that beat through the ice, melting and cracking.

And then he left for work.

Jungkoook had dreams.

Dreamed about that night months ago when Minwo had kicked Jimin out. And the dream always started off the same way: Jungkook opening the door.

Gorgeous, pastel pink hair softening the sharpness of Jimin's jawline, his shattered gaze. White, crystalline snow whirling around him. Nose and ears and hands red. Purple lips. Blue Jacket. Teal converses.

Skinny, so skinny.

But beautiful, so beautiful.

Jimin was a siren in a snowstorm. Always standing on the porch, shivering madly, shaking with agony. And it was just the two of them. Nobody else, the world black and smudged around the edges, Jimin painted with colors amongst the dull.

Sometimes Jungkook stepped out onto the porch with Jimin. Wrapped Jimin up in his arms and held him.

Sometimes Jungkook shut the door, Jimin's eyes wide and desperate.

And sometimes Jungkook had hung up when Jimin had first tried to call him.

But without fail, Jimin always showed up on the porch. Always asked for help. And Jungkook, he always felt so angry, so wrenched and twisted inside.

And he wanted so badly to just forget it all. To forgive completely, not an ounce of spite left. And he was close, so close to forgiveness. He'd felt it when Jimin had asked in the car. But Jungkook, he knew he wasn't there yet. Wasn't there all the way.

But he was trying.

God, was he trying.

Because in his dreams he was still angry. Still hurting. And maybe it was just because of the GCF meeting coming up tomorrow, but he found himself stuck in that cycle over and over again.

Open the door.

Jimin on the porch.

Blue and pink and white.

And he had forgiven Jimin. Had meant it wholeheartedly in the car. But he was still fucking torn inside and that frustrated him to no end. Couldn't understand why it was so hard to let it all go when Jimin wasn't sitting beside him, nursing their nightly glass of water, so wrecked and lost.

“You okay?”

Jungkook blinked, coming out of his morning daze, the dream still fresh in his mind. Tilted his head up to look at Tae, the 95er standing over him. Silk pajamas, paint and ink splotched over his hands from work the previous day, eyebrows furrowed in concern.

“You’ve been ‘Jungshook’ for about ten minutes now.”

Jungkook rolled his eyes, a sleepy smile on his face as he pushed himself to sit up, blanket pooling on his lap. The fresh morning air settled over his bare torso like a refreshed sigh, the cool spring light bleeding through the blinds, lighting the room with soft blues and whites.

“Why are you watching me, hyung?” Jungkook asked while stretching his arms out in front of him, muscle shifting and tightening.

Tae hummed, not really answering as he made his way around Jungkook’s bed, pulling the cord on the blinds. Bright light washed through the room, stinging Jungkook’s gaze with purple and black splotches.

“Hyung,” Jungkook groaned, rubbing at his shot eyes.

The bed dipped and even though Jungkook was currently blind, he heard the rustle of sheets, knew Tae was spread out on his bed. Pulled the blankets away from Jungkook, curling into them himself, making himself comfortable in the maknae’s bed.

Jungkook was a patient dongsaeng.

“Shouldn’t you be on a walk with Namjoon-hyung?”

“He had something important at GCF today.”

Jungkook’s vision finally cleared of splotches, and he looked over at Tae, his heart plummeting into a pool of nerves. Felt shadows press at his shoulders, embracing him from behind, a shiver down his spine. “For the meeting tomorrow?”

Tae just stared at his hands, turning them over in front of his face, studying the paints flecks and ink blossoms pressed into his tan knuckles. And the quiet, it brought Jungkook’s dreams back to him, shoving their way through his mind.

This is… this is really stupid. I just-- I need… I need a place to stay. Just for the night.

Why are you calling ***me,*** *though?*

I don’t… I don’t have anywhere else to go.

Jimin, I don’t… why? What happened? I thought you lived with Minwo.

I do… I do… he-- we had a fight… please. I know you hate me… but it’s just for one night. Then I won’t bother you ever again…. I’ll be gone before you even wake up.

~~*Leave me alone.*~~

Fine.

“You’re spaced out again,” Tae said while reaching up to smooth a thumb over Jungkook’s ear.

Jungkook shook his head, eyes flicking over to his best friend. “Sorry, hyung. I’m just tired.”

Tae’s eyes were faraway and contemplative as he pushed himself to sit up, pulling Jungkook’s blanket off his legs. “This meeting… what does it mean, Jungkook-ah?”

Jungkook shrugged, chewing on his bottom lip as he stared at the wall across the room.

“They haven’t called you in for a meeting in months.”

Jungkook just shrugged again.

“Do you think it’s because of Minwo?”

Just that name made something rancid swirl through Jungkook’s body. Because Minwo had showed up on his porch, so sure of his words, so sure that Jimin would leave and run back to him. And Jungkook couldn’t get Minwo’s broken look out of his mind, the edging insanity as he insisted that he needed to speak to Jimin.

“I don’t know.”

Tae pursed his lips, nodding to himself. “Whatever happens tomorrow… your hyungs are here for you. I’m here for you.”

Jungkook nodded. “Thank you.”

And his hyungs, he knew they’d be there for him. They always had been, had always tried to help in whatever ways they could. But that didn’t dissolve the knot of terror in his stomach, the oily feeling choking him up inside.

Because whatever was to happen at that meeting, it wasn’t going to be good.

And Jungkook didn’t know if he was ready for that.

Chapter End Notes

> idk why but i'm getting a little discouraged with this story... i kinda don't really want to post it anymore? idk haha i think i'm just thinking too much lately

a flower that can't be bloomed

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“It’s been over a year and nothing has happened with this case, Jungkook. We need to consider other options.”

“But it’s *my* company. You can’t just get rid of me because of *alleged* allegations.”

“We’re not getting rid of you, Jungkook-ah. It’s temporary.”

“I understood putting Minwo in charge while I was going through the court hearings, but publicly making him the new CEO?”

There was a silence around the long, oval table as Jungkook’s friends and coworkers watched him with a mix of pity and hesitance. Jungkook sat forward a bit more, straightening his suit as he took a deep breath, gaze locked with Yugyeom’s.

“Jungkook-ah… our sales have suffered ever since this whole thing started. We’re headed downhill, and if we don’t take action soon, GCF might go under.” At Jungkook’s sharp look, Yugyeom shifted uncomfortably in his high-backed leather chair.

“Then why are you trying to-”

“We have no other options,” Yugyeom muttered, clicking a pen against the polished surface of the table. “Look, we all love you, Jungkook. You’re our friend and leader, and this company’s creator… and not one of us believe you’re guilty. Not a single person in this room does.”

All of GCF’s head staff nodded, the mood of the room somewhere between downcast and guilty. But no one spoke up.

“But we need to move on. And we’re not… firing you…” Yugyeom assured Jungkook. “It’s just… we need to get past this slump and start making profit again.”

“Slump? You think my life possibly being ruined is a slump?”

“Jungkook-” Namjoon warned.

He’d been afraid of this meeting since they’d texted him two weeks previous. Texted him the morning he’d woken up in the park by the Han River, body stiff and cold, Jimin curled into his side. Ever since they’d told him there’d be a meeting.

Jungkook looked around at the familiar faces surrounding the table. These people… they were suffering because of Jungkook, whether or not he’d actually committed the crime.

These were the people that had helped form GCF, the people that had maintained it and busted their asses to make it rise. If they didn’t do something, they might all lose their jobs. They had families they needed to support, bills they needed to pay, and lives they needed to live.

It wasn’t fair to them.

“I understand,” Jungkook murmured, gaze falling from Yugyeom’s face.

“Jungkook,” Jieun, one of the head secretaries, muttered. The maknae looked up at her. “We support you. No matter what the courts decide, you are our friend here. We’re not replacing you, we’re just going to find someone to fill your spot publicly until everything gets cleared up.”

“It’ll be one of us. We’re not bringing in a total stranger,” Yugyeom assured him. “And it’ll only be temporary.”

Jungkook’s gaze immediately flitted to Minwo’s empty seat. Empty because he was currently in Japan. “Not him.”

“Minwo’s already shown great potential in managing things while you’ve been gone. He’s good at what he does.”

Purple and blue and pink marred smooth skin, old ones and new ones that looked like they’d just blossomed.

“He testified against me.”

The plate flying towards Jimin’s head, smashing against his face.

“He did… but he was just doing what he thought was right.”

You can fuck him all you like, but he'll always be mine.

“… why *him?”*

He was mad. And he used the handcuffs to… he handcuffed me to the punching bag in the basement gym--

“He’s a good guy, and he does a lot of good things for the company.”

And Jungkook had never been more tempted to show them the video. Never been more tempted than he was just then. Because none of them knew what a monster Minwo was. Hell, Minwo had fooled Jungkook for *years.* And if they knew… god, if they knew what Minwo had done to Jimin, they’d never let him into GCF again.

But Jungkook couldn’t do that to Jimin. He couldn’t. So he nodded numbly, sinking back into his chair as the head staff shared worried looks before continuing the meeting.

Jungkook didn’t say another word.

His life was crumbling around him and there was nothing he could do.

Mood: lovely (with Kahlid) by Billie Eilish

Hayoon shoved her hands in her pockets, sniffling a little as the cold October air nipped her nose. The courthouse shown bright behind her, bleeding into her mind as she went over the new information Kim Minwo had brought attention to during the hearing.

Jisoo had brought Jungkook a cup of coffee, had been with him around the time the assault would’ve taken place.

Her sister’s face blindsided her, blurring everything out of reality. She’d been to see Jisoo just

before the court session, had held her hand as the heart monitor beeped, the plastic mask over her mouth fogging with a faint breath every now and then. Still as death, pale, unmoving. And the new evidence, it made Hayoon want to shake Jisoo's shoulders, yell at her until she woke up like she'd done when they were children.

It was nights like this one where Hayoon missed Jisoo the most. Where she thought of her dazzling smile and bubbly laugh, her pure heart and kind soul. Jisoo had always smoothed out Hayoon's rough edges. After all, that'd been their dynamic; Jisoo was the sun while Hayoon was the moon.

And when one lost the other, the world was thrown out of balance, tilted and smashed and wrong. And everything in the world felt too empty without her completely in it, hanging in an awkward in between, a grey space of life and death.

Jisoo would either wake up or die. There was no other alternative. And hope, it was a damn hard thing to hold onto. Slipped through your fingers like wisps of cigarette smoke falling from lips. But Hayoon tried, tried anyways to hold onto a fickle brightness when she was reminded over and over again that her sister, her twin, was dead to the world.

Hayoon missed Jisoo, missed her more than breathing.

She huffed out a sigh, hands clenching into fists in her pockets as she kicked at a stray pebble, heart twisting with helpless frustration. Wanted Jisoo to just fucking wake up. Wanted her sister's eyes to open, lungs to breathe a long, sweet breath as she sat up and smiled in that damn hospital bed.

And the first word out of Jisoo's mouth would be the name of her attacker.

And then this whole fucking mess would be over and Hayoon could stop seeing pictures of her sister's battered body on a projector, stop hearing Jeon Jungkook plead his innocence over and over again.

Hayoon was almost to her car, the bluish white light of the street lamps washing over black asphalt, everything bitter and cold and dark. And as she got closer to her car, she heard something that made her freeze in her tracks.

Hand closed around the keys in her pocket, slotting one of them firmly between her middle and index fingers, ready to fucking fight whoever was out there with her. Because if it was another reporter, she was going to fucking drill her car key into their eye and cut their brain out.

But as she tilted her head, that strange sound somewhere off to her left, she hesitated. Because she was pretty sure a reporter wouldn't be curled up on the ground next to their car, hidden in the shadows, clawing their fingers into the ground.

Her feet were frozen as she debated whether or not to approach. Didn't want to get involved with something that was none of her business, not when she was all alone in deserted parking lot.

She was about to leave, about to continue walking to her car and mind her own business, but Jisoo was in her head. Because Jisoo would've helped the person, no matter what. She would've gone up and made sure they were okay at the very least.

So Hayoon gritted her teeth, hand clenching tighter around the key in her pocket. And she started walking towards the person in the shadow of the car.

She didn't take more than five steps closer before she realized the guy was young like her, head hung and bangs in his eyes, preventing her from seeing who it might be.

What she could tell, though, was that this person was in pain. Was hurting so bad she could feel it in her chest, could feel that pain directly in her lungs as she breathed in. And so she pressed forward, Jisoo's face in her mind, bright smile too good and kind for the world.

And her world fell apart around her as she realized who it was, had gotten too close to back away now. Because it was Jeon Jungkook, the youngest self-made CEO in the film industry. Jeon Jungkook, who was on trial for potentially putting her sister in a fucking coma. Jeon Jungkook, the young man Hayoon had spent the past months loathing.

And he was clawing his fingers into the ground, so hard his nails were cracking up, the pads of his fingers bloody and raw. Back pressed firmly against the car, shadows engulfing him, shoulders shaking so hard Hayoon thought he might be having a seizure.

"Jungkook?"

The ex-CEO didn't move, didn't even look up at her. And she thought he might even be overdosing on something, might be trying to find an easy way out of all of this. And so she surged forward, kneeling by his side, ready to fucking save his ass so that he could spend the rest of his life in prison like he deserved.

But Jungkook wasn't overdosing, wasn't having a seizure. Because when she touched him, his head snapped up, bangs finally revealing his cracked, bloodshot gaze. And she flinched, flinched at the flooding torment stitched into the colors of his eyes, the way he was too lost to be found, too broken to be put back together.

And if it wasn't for Jisoo in the back of her head, she would've slapped Jungkook across the face while she had the chance. Would've stomped his pride down, told him exactly what she thought of him. Would've screamed and clawed and throttled, if only to get the answer out of his throat.

But she was frozen; couldn't move, couldn't even blink as she stared at the fractured youth at her fingertips.

Because when this whole thing had started, Hayoon had needed someone to hate. And that person had been Jungkook. Because he was the prime suspect, the only one without an alibi, had been in the building with Jisoo at the time of the assault. So, naturally, Hayoon had fucking hated him.

But she couldn't… she couldn't bring herself to hate this person in front of her, as hard as she tried. She couldn't. Because as hard as she'd made to believe that he really was the one that'd crushed her twin's life, she'd faltered.

Had faltered in that belief trial after trial, seeing the terrified young man brutally slaughtered in the courts.

"What's happening?" Hayoon asked, still not sure whether he could actually be having a seizure.

Jungkook clawed his bloody hands over his face, choking on a broken sob. Face twisted, twisted with so much wrenching anguish she couldn't look away.

"Are you having a seizure?" A blunt question was all she could muster, all she could think to ask. How else was she supposed to know? "Do I need to call an ambulance?"

Jungkook shook his head, still heaving with tears, his whole soul shredding itself apart.

Hayoon sucked in a breath, finally releasing the iron grip she'd had on the key in her pocket, her hand aching from crushing her fingers around rigid metal.

And she sat with him. Sat with him for what must've been an hour as he sobbed. And at some point she'd grabbed his wrists, refusing to let go, not wanting him to keep clawing at things; at his face, at the ground.

And they didn't speak at all. Didn't say anything that whole night. And she didn't know what had happened, but whatever it was had ripped Jungkook apart.

Finally, she left. Left when Jungkook shoved himself up to his feet, making it into his car without looking at her. She got in her own car, shaken still from seeing such a vulnerable, exposed side of Jungkook she'd never imagined existing before.

The next time she saw him, it was in court.

And the time after that, she saw him pressed between the sheets of her bed, the world successfully forgotten and the pain compressed to a dull ache.

Jimin couldn't sleep.

He tossed and turned on the couch, bright yellow blanket wrapped cozily around his body, the fluffy pillow beneath his head as comfortable as ever. There was no reason he shouldn't be able to sleep.

Because today had been a good day. A *really* good day. He'd gotten a shift off from the coffee shop, so he'd had some free time. Had gone to dance with Hoseok for a few hours, going to dinner with Tae and Jin afterwards. For the first time in a while, Minwo's shadow over Jimin didn't seem so dark, so present. So he should be able to sleep just fine.

But he couldn't stop thinking about Jungkook.

Jungkook, who'd come back from the GCF meeting in his suit and tie, looking like he was ready to shatter. Had mumbled something to Yoongi before he'd promptly fled to his room, not coming out for the rest of the day, his hyungs knowing to stay back for a little bit to give him time to process whatever had happened.

And as stupid as it was, Jimin couldn't sleep because Jungkook hadn't brought him his glass of water yet. Because it had become something of a ritual to the both of them.

Jungkook would sit on the couch with Jimin every night, both of them sipping at water and talking, sometimes even watching a movie or something. And then Jungkook would go to bed, and Jimin would fall asleep with nothing but warmth in his chest.

And so tonight, because Jungkook hadn't brought Jimin a glass of water, he found himself wide awake and a little agitated, not sure why something so small had such a big impact.

He'd been trying to sleep for hours at this point, was getting nowhere, so Jimin got up from the couch, yellow blanket wrapped around his shoulders. Stood and wandered over to the kitchen, fetching two glasses and filling them with water.

He was standing in front of Jungkook's door before he knew it, heart beating hard and fast in his chest. His nerves were fluttering through his stomach, and he knew it was stupid to feel this nervous. But he pushed through it, remembering all the times Jungkook had sat by his side, offering a glass of water.

He knocked.

He was met with silence. But there was a faint light shining through the gap between the door and the floor, and if Jimin listened hard enough, he could hear someone was still awake. He knocked one more time, receiving no response.

He opened the door.

Mood: The Truth Untold by BTS

Jungkook was facing away from Jimin, towards the closed bedroom window. Was still in his dress shirt and slacks, his suit coat and shoes discarded on the floor next to Jimin's feet.

The maknae's shoulders were slumped, his head hung in defeat, and Jimin hesitated near the door, eventually pushed himself to step into the room after a long pause. Made his way around the bed, grasping the cups of water a little too hard in his hands. Felt a little stupid all of the sudden.

He'd come too far to back out now.

"Jungkook?" Jimin asked, voice carrying softly through the room.

Jungkook didn't look up at him, not yet. His dark brown eyes were trained on the covered window in front of him, as if he could see right through the blinds. The golden light from the little desk lamp on the other side of the room lit half of Jungkook's face, his jawline sharp and chiseled with shadows, his fair skin smooth and bordering on tan. The light caught in the soft blacks of his hair, styled up to show his forehead and those sharp brows.

Devastatingly handsome, Jimin thought. *And almost beautiful, too, in a certain kind of way.*

Jimin held out the cup of water, his hand shaking the tiniest bit. And when Jungkook didn't move to take it right away, Jimin almost thought he never would. So he was already taking a step back when Jungkook reached up, still not meeting Jimin's gaze. Took the cup of water offered to him, cradling it in his hands.

Jimin cautiously sat next to Jungkook on the bed, looking from the blinds to Jungkook and back again. Jungkook sipped at the water, closing his eyes for a long moment. And during that moment, Jimin reached forward, opening the blinds, the starry night sky greeting the both of them.

Jungkook finally turned his head, looking over at Jimin. And the breath was almost knocked from Jimin's lungs because Jungkook looked so… so *crushed.* Crushed and shattered and broken apart, his heart torn out and stomped on, a pile of cracked glass on the floor.

Jimin didn't know why he did it. Found himself reaching up, sweeping strands of Jungkook's soft black hair away, keeping the maknae's aching gaze as his palm slipped down to cup the side of Jungkook's face.

"What happened?"

Jungkook didn't say anything for a moment, his hand coming up and smoothing over Jimin's, leaning into the touch. He shut his eyes again, and this time tears slid down the maknae's cheeks, wet against Jimin's hand.

"I lost it," Jungkook whispered, voice so small Jimin had to lean forward to hear.

"Lost what?" Jimin asked just as quietly, though he thought he already had an idea. But Jungkook

didn't say anything, only leaned more into Jimin's palm. "Jungkook?"

Jungkook finally opened his eyes, a few more tears trailing down his face. Looked sick with sadness, a hopelessness pinned into the lining of his soul. "They're going to publicly announce Minwo as the new CEO."

Jimin's mind locked up, freezing on Minwo's name. Tried putting his ex with the title of CEO. Not just a CEO, but the CEO of Golden Closet Films. Jungkook's company, pride, and passion. His dream.

Minwo had stolen Jimin's dreams, and now he would steal Jungkook's, too.

Jimin gently pulled his hand from Jungkook's face, the maknae letting go. And Jimin set his untouched cup of water on the floor by the bed before slowly taking the yellow blanket off from around his shoulders, reaching over and placing it around Jungkook's.

Jungkook didn't look at Jimin, instead accepting the blanket, hands curling lightly into the yellow fabric and pulling it more securely around his shoulders. It was a spot of brightness in the dark, the only bright thing Jimin really had to offer at the moment.

It was quiet. They sat there on the bed together, looking out at the stars through the window, Jimin subtly studying their reflections in the glass. He felt that warmth in his chest again as he studied Jungkook, a sort of affection he wasn't really used to. Felt it and clutched onto it, letting it wrap around him as he shifted a little closer to the maknae.

"I'm sorry," Jimin murmured.

Jungkook was staring out the window, possibly looking back at Jimin, though Jimin couldn't really tell. "I keep asking myself where it went wrong." Jungkook took a deep breath, scrubbing his hands over his face. "Why everyone thinks I could've done something like that."

Jimin's gaze dropped to the dark hardwood flooring and grey area rug, his glass of water casting a distorted beam of light across the floor where the lamplight hit it. Another long pause.

"Do you think I did it?"

"No," Jimin responded immediately, not having to think about it for even a second. "I think you were in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Jungkook huffed, looking up at the ceiling. "That's not what you said in the courthouse."

That little bitch isn't going to last much longer… he's gonna fucking lose.

I know… I know… he deserves it.

Jimin felt like throwing up, remembering that night with Minwo. How his ex had pushed him into the corner, up against that wall. Started fucking him where anyone could walk in and see. And Jungkook had. Jungkook had heard everything Jimin had said, heard those damning words used to appease Minwo.

"Jungkook," Jimin whispered, meeting the maknae's gaze through the reflection of the window. But he was surprised, seeing no anger in those weary doe eyes. "I didn't mean what I said that night. I didn't mean a single word. I only said those things so that he wouldn't be angry with me."

Jungkook nodded a little, still looking back at Jimin through their reflection. "I know… I shouldn't

have brought it up… I guess I'm just-- I just feel like everything is falling apart. Like I failed everyone. My family, my company, my hyungs. " He finally broke their gaze, looking down at his hands. "I just keep wishing I could go back in time and… I don't know, not find her?"

Jimin didn't say anything, just listening.

"I mean, I'm glad I found her. If I hadn't, she would've died. But I wish it hadn't been me. Is that awful? That I wish it wasn't me? That I wish someone else had found her, and that they would've been arrested instead?"

Jimin shook his head. "No. It's not. I have regrets, too. Sometimes I think back and wish I never would've… never would've done some of the things I did."

Jungkook seemed to ease a little at those words, his shoulders not as tense. "What if I do go to prison? If they find me guilty eventually because she never wakes up?"

Jimin fought back the coiling, sickening feeling in his gut at the thought. "You won't… you're innocent."

Jungkook shrugged his shoulders in defeat, finally turning his head to look at Jimin. "What if I'm not?"

Jimin's heart skipped a beat, stuttering. "What do you mean?"

"They found my DNA on her body, right? What if it *was* me and I just don't know it?"

Jimin shook his head, touching Jungkook's shoulder. "That's ridiculous, Jungkook. I know you didn't do it."

"How? How do you know?"

~~Because how could you have done it? You've only ever treated me with kindness, even when you hated me. You're kind and passionate, and you have a beautiful heart. You're made of golden rain and diamond smiles and ruby heartprints, and you turn everything around you into pearl.~~

"I just know. I know it wasn't you."

Jungkook nodded a little sullenly, easing himself back down onto the bed, curling more into the yellow blanket. Jimin's heart hurt looking at Jungkook, seeing how wrecked he was over this.

"I *am* sorry."

"About what?" Jungkook muttered.

"Minwo. I'm sorry he's doing this to you."

Jungkook was looking up at Jimin from where he lay, the golden light from the lamp making his face glow softly. "Why are you apologizing for him?"

"I supported him." Jimin shrugged, an uncomfortable tightness in his chest. "I guess I'm apologizing for me, too."

Jungkook's eyes flitted around Jimin's face for a second, studying him. Nodded a little, gaze going up to the ceiling above him. And he looked so handsome lying there in his dress clothes, that yellow blanket beneath him, his hair swept back from his forehead. But Jimin shoved those thoughts away, pinching the skin of his wrist hard enough to sting.

It was quiet for a while, Jimin staring through the window, Jungkook still lying on the bed. The stars were glittering prettily, even through the lights of Seoul, and Jimin envied them a little. Envied them for how they were so detached from the world, yet so essential to how the world survived.

When Jimin looked over at Jungkook again, he saw the maknae's eyes were closed, his breaths even and smooth. And so Jimin stood from the bed, almost knocking over the glass of water on the floor. But as he took a step away, something warm caught his wrist.

He looked back to see Jungkook peering up at him sleepily. "Stay." Jimin blinked at him, a little surprised. Not sure if he was quite understanding what Jungkook wanted. Jungkook tugged weakly on his wrist, urging him back towards the bed. "Just for tonight."

Jimin swallowed hard, his heart thundering in his chest. He knew he was blushing, could feel the heat blooming in his cheeks. But he just nodded, muttering a small "okay."

Jimin pulled away from Jungkook's grasp, walking across the room and flicking off the switch on the lamp. The bedroom was swallowed in blacks and blues, the gold of the light gone. And as Jimin made his way back over to Jungkook, his footsteps unsure, his heart even more so, he almost thought Jungkook had fallen asleep again.

But as soon as Jimin's thighs touched the mattress, Jungkook clutched at his wrist again. And looking down at Jungkook, so dark and handsome, images flashed through Jimin's mind. Images of Hayoon tangled in his sheets, Jungkook shirtless and out of breath as he opened the bedroom door.

But before Jimin could think too much about it, Jungkook had pulled him down beside him on the bed, pulling the yellow blanket over the both of them. The maknae scooped Jimin in close, arms wrapped around him, clinging to Jimin like a lifeline.

Jungkook was asleep after what must've been ten seconds, exhausted and emotionally worn out. And Jimin just laid there for a while, gaze tracing the curves and angles of his face. Just looking, pondering, thinking.

And just like at the park, Jimin felt safe. Completely safe. Felt like nothing in the world could harm him when he was with Jungkook. And it was weird, that feeling, and he knew he shouldn't even be beginning to feel any of these things.

And so he shoved aside the ridiculous fluttering in his stomach and curled closer into Jungkook's warm body. Didn't want to feel, not right now, not when Jungkook was hurting so much. Not when he already had Hayoon, already had someone he loved. And Jimin felt guilty for that, for thinking about how lovely Jungkook looked in the blues of the room.

After all Jimin had done to Jungkook, he didn't deserve to even begin thinking like that.

Because this whole thing, it was Jimin's fault. Because he couldn't do it, couldn't go to the police. Because just the thought of other people knowing what Jimin had allowed to happen, what Minwo had done to him, made his heart flatline and his legs give out. Because Jimin was the one who'd fallen, fallen for a man who was more monster than human.

Why did it matter, though? Why couldn't Jimin just do it, his thoughts and feelings and fears be damned? Why couldn't he just fucking testify against the monster that had ruined him for two years?

Fucking bitch, fucking whore, little fucking liar…

He was afraid of himself.

Afraid of how weak he was, how selfish. He'd always been too selfish; that's why he ran. Because he was broken up inside and didn't want others to see. Because Minwo was right. He'd always been right.

Jimin was a coward.

"I'm sorry," Jimin whispered into the stillness of Jungkook's bedroom. Reached up, running his fingertips over Jungkook's weary brow, brushing aside a black curl of hair. "I'm so sorry."

It was a while before Jimin fell asleep, curled up in Jungkook's arms.

Chapter End Notes

thank you all so much for the encouraging comments and pure support. i took a few days just to step back; i didn't write at all, but i read over what i already have and got past my mental block a bit. sorry if i worried any of you. i won't post as often as i did before, but the updates will still be relatively frequent. thank you so much for understanding and for loving my story <3

a dream that can't come true

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Golden Closet Films Announces New CEO

Jungkook saw it everywhere he scrolled, his phone blaring the words at him, stitching them into his skin. And just like that, he'd lost everything. His position, his company, his pride.

Everything gone.

Jungkook knew he'd never been good at coping with loss. Like when he was little and his kitten ran away and never came back. He'd searched for it for weeks, wandering up and down streets with a little picture of it grasped in his hands, tears threatening to spill down his cheeks.

Where is Jeon Jungkook Now? More About the Fall of Golden Closet Film's Previous CEO

Or when he'd moved to Seoul on his own at the tender age of 15, already sponsored by several big corporations for the promise he showed, the talent. He'd missed his parents terribly, felt like he'd been ripped away from them too soon. Luckily, he'd wound up living with the people that would become his new family: his hyungs.

New CEO of Golden Closet Films, Kim Minwo, Has Yet to Make a Statement

But this, the loss of Golden Closet Films, was something that tore Jungkook apart more than he'd thought possible. Because it was like his heart was made of paper, and fate or destiny or whatever the hell was out there had taken his fragile heart and torn it into pieces. And then burned it. And then dumped the ashes over Jungkook's head and laughed--

He'd never been good at dealing with loss.

Family of Assault Victim Says They Are Relieved to See Golden Closet Films Finally Taking Action

Jimin had been gone when Jungkook had woken up. He hadn't been surprised, knew Jimin had work and there was no way he could stay. But Jungkook would be lying if he didn't say he was a little disappointed.

It had been incredibly selfish of him to ask Jimin to stay, to sleep in his arms. But he'd justified it at the moment, was still trying to justify it in his head. Told himself he deserved to be selfish every now and then. That he could give in a little to these strange feelings that seemed to be coming out of hiding after months and months.

The Night Everything Went Wrong and How it Shaped the Future of One of the Fastest Rising Film Industries in the World

So he'd asked Jimin to stay. And Jimin had. He'd curled right into Jungkook's arms, clinging onto him through the night. Even when Jungkook woke up a couple hours after falling asleep, he'd found Jimin was out like a light but somehow still holding onto him.

And even though Jimin was just at work, Jungkook missed him. Found himself looking through those pictures he'd taken of Jimin that night in downtown Seoul. Had even taken the polaroid of Jimin that had been in Minwo's living room out of his photo album, staring at it.

Is Jeon Jungkook Guilty? An In-Depth Look at the Case that Split the Country

And Jungkook's hyungs had been coming to him all day, bringing him food that remained untouched or just sitting with him, rubbing his back. Taehyung had laid behind him for hours, arm slung over Jungkook's waist, holding him close.

But Jungkook was numb. Numb to the outside world. The only thing resonating through his head were the headlines proclaiming his guilt. That, and Jimin. Because Jungkook was so close to taking that USB and turning it into the damned media. So close to showing the world what a real monster looked like.

But if Minwo was the lion, Jimin was the lamb. And he'd be picked apart and brutally slaughtered by the world, the media, no matter his situation.

Because it was a scandal. A scandal in any light Jungkook looked at it. And he could see those headlines, could see them tattooed into Jimin's skin. And Jungkook couldn't do that. Couldn't do that when people didn't know Jimin, wouldn't understand. Would judge Jimin the way Jungkook had judged him.

The Youngest CEO in South Korea's History: A Hidden Monster that Fooled the World

Mood: Let's Hurt Tonight by OneRepublic

Something was prying Jungkook's phone out of his hands. Pulling his fingers apart from the death-grip on the device. And then his phone was being turned off, set aside. And someone was slipping into Jungkook's bed.

But it wasn't his hyungs this time. This time it was Jimin, Jimin who wordlessly wrapped his arms around Jungkook, burying his face in the maknae's chest. Just holding him. Taking him away from those damning news articles he'd spent the entire day pouring over, reading like they were a drug.

"Stop that, Jungkook."

Jungkook swallowed hard, blinking, hands hovering above Jimin's shoulder blades, still not accepting his embrace. "Stop what?" The first words he'd uttered all day.

"Stop hurting yourself."

"I'm not."

"You are."

"I'm not… I'm not hurting myself."

"Stop."

Jungkook's hands finally settled around Jimin. Held onto him just like he'd done the previous night: his final thread tying him to sanity. And sometimes he wished he could freeze time, turn it back. Erase everything and start over. But that wasn't possible.

The trials would continue.

And Jungkook would eventually rot away in a prison cell.

“Stop,” Jimin whispered into Jungkook’s shirt. “Stop thinking like that. You’re not guilty. You’re not a murderer. Those news articles are wrong.”

“How do you know that?” Jungkook murmured numbly, heart icy and cold. “How are you so sure?”

“I loved a monster for two years. You’re not one.”

Jungkook buried his face in Jimin’s neck, arms crushing around his waist. Holding him so tightly. And maybe time was frozen. But maybe it was okay for it to stand still like this.

It was okay.

A few days later, Jimin’s hands were covered in paint.

Splotches of blue and white and pink, the outline of a flower blooming across the canvas. He rubbed at the drying speckles on his knuckles, paint brush gently held between his teeth as he fidgeted.

“That looks great, Jimin-ah,” Taehyung complimented warmly, small smile dipping the corners of his mouth into tiny dimples. “What is it?”

Jimin snorted back a laugh, taking the paint brush out of his mouth and pointing at the obvious flower in the very middle. “It’s a flower.”

Tae tilted his head to the side, trying to see it from Jimin’s perspective. Looked kind of like a big, tan puppy assessing a potential toy. “I don’t see it.”

Jimin huffed, puckering his lips in a little pout. Turned the canvas all the way around so that Tae could see it properly, watching the other 95er’s face, waiting for the recognition to settle in. But Tae just kept staring at it. Staring and staring, contemplating something.

Jimin lightly smacked Tae’s arm when the other 95er made a silly face, saying he still couldn’t recognize it.

“Look,” Jimin pouted, pointing to the blue petals. Delicate and sharp, lighter blue fading out into a dark navy, the color of the sky the night Jimin had slept in Jungkook’s arms by the Han River. There were little flecks of white over the darkest parts, Jimin’s best attempt at stars. “These are the petals,” he said while tracing the outline of one. He pointed to the light pink middle- a delicate, dusty pink with just the slightest undertones of rose gold. “This is the center.”

Tae tilted his head to the other side, holding back his signature boxy grin, still feigning ignorance.

“This,” Jimin said pointedly, fingertip tracing the withering black and white stem, “is the stem.”

“Why is the stem so brittle?”

It was a genuine question, an undertone of teasing laced through it. But Jimin just pursed his lips, shoulders lifting in a soft shrug. “It didn’t have enough water, I guess.”

“The rest of it is so beautiful, though,” Tae said with a nod, peering at Jimin with those warm

brown eyes, his bleached bangs shimmering white-gold in the kitchen lights.

“So you *can* tell it’s a flower?”

Tae just laughed, looking back down at the painting he’d been working on. It was definitely abstract, and Jimin really couldn’t tell what it was. Was too afraid to ask, honestly. And his art, Jimin could tell why Tae was an artist, could see it in the fine lining of the brush strokes, the purpose of every stripe of color, every placement of shape.

“It’s a bird,” Tae offered.

Jimin shook his head immediately. “There’s no way that’s a bird.”

Tae turned the canvas around, a genuine sparkle in his eye. But he didn’t explain it, not like Jimin had explained his own. He simply let Jimin take it in for himself, study it, decipher it in his own mind.

There was still no way it was a fucking bird, though.

They were interrupted by a knock at the front door. And Jimin, knowing Minwo was back in Seoul, was immediately sitting up straighter, eyeing the door while fear pumped hot over his ribs.

Tae didn’t seem bothered in the slightest, instead standing from his seat across the table and making his way over to the door. And Jimin was watching him, feet buzzing, legs numb with adrenaline. Ready to run. Ready to run. Ready to run.

And then Tae opened the door.

“Hayoon-ah?”

“Hey, Tae. Is Jungkook home?”

Tae was opening the door a little wider, letting the small young woman in. And as the adrenaline drained from Jimin’s limbs just as quickly as it’d filled them, he was overcome with something else. Something strange, something sour. Didn’t understand why his heart beat so hard seeing her.

Sleek black hair that fell past her shoulders and dark, glittering eyes enhanced by a little makeup. A button nose and pretty pink lips and a defined chin. She was gorgeous. Jimin could see why Jungkook liked her. And maybe that’s what was wrong.

It didn’t take more than a second for her eyes to find his, and Jimin was holding his breath, biting his lip, leg bouncing restlessly beneath the table. And she was staring at him with something like fear, and Jimin didn’t understand it. Didn’t understand why she was staring at him so boldly.

“He’s upstairs in his room,” Tae was saying, awkwardly fidgeting with his paint-splattered hands.

Hayoon snapped her gaze away from Jimin, taking a deep breath as she looked back to Tae. “Thank you.”

Tae came back to the table, and Jimin’s eyes stayed trained on the small woman as she made her way across the living room. Disappeared down the hall, light footsteps echoing up the stairs.

And Jimin, his throat was mud and sand, the air in his lungs turned to mortar. Choking on crimson dreams and glistening lights, not sure where his mind had wandered off to. Not sure he wanted to follow.

“You okay?” Tae asked, hand subconsciously finding the spot on the curve of Jimin’s shoulder. Massaged his long fingers into the stiff muscles of Jimin’s nape.

Jimin nodded quickly, not wanting to admit Jungkook’s relationship with Hayoon bothered him. Didn’t really have any place thinking like that, not when Jungkook had moved on long ago. Not when Jimin had burned that bridge the night in the courthouse.

“I think I’m done painting for the night.”

“Okay,” Tae said.

Jimin stood from the table, starting to clean up the painting mess they’d made. Jin had scolded them beforehand, making them put newspaper down over the fine wood so that they didn’t ruin it, and Jimin was grateful for the foresight as he balled the paint-speckled paper up in his hands. Tae helped clean the paint brushes and water cups, Jimin working alongside him in silence.

Jimin didn't say anything else as Tae left with their paintings, going to put it someplace to dry.

It had been three hours.

Jimin was lying on the couch, headphones clamped over his ears, blasting music. Was too afraid of the silence, didn’t want to hear anything. Didn’t think he’d be able to stomach the sounds, sounds that would confirm exactly what Hayoon and Jungkook were doing.

So he was sitting on the couch, legs pulled up to his chest as he stared at the front window, thinking of all the times he’d fucked up in the past two years. Drowned himself, drowned in memories black and coiling. Didn’t understand why he couldn’t accept what was happening between them.

Why did you give the paper back?

Why did you give it to me in the first place?

I wanted to be your friend… get to know you... and I sort of… I sort of had a massive crush on you.

Jimin flinched, arms tightening around his legs, trying to focus on the music pounding through his ears. Didn’t want to fucking think anymore. Didn’t deserve to think anymore.

That night in the courthouse, I meant what I said. You deserve it. You deserve everything you’ve gotten and more.

I used you then and I’ve used you every time I’ve seen you since.

I don’t need you. I never needed you.

I never even cared. I didn’t then and I don’t now.

Jimin shook his head, threading his fingers lightly through his hair, trying, trying to focus on anything but the past. Because Jimin, Jimin was the monster in this story. He was the coward, the liar, the thief. He didn’t deserve a fucking happy ending, not after everything he’d done.

Guilt, a wallowing, four-faced demon. Green and choking and just his luck. Always had been. And it swallowed him up, swallowed him whole. And he didn’t want to *fucking think~*

He needed sleep.

It was 1 am, four hours before he needed to leave for work, and if he didn't get at least a little sleep he wouldn't be able to make it through both shifts.

But his yellow blanket, it was upstairs in Jungkook's bed. They'd shared the blanket since that first night, had slept wrapped up in each other's arms. And Jimin, he'd momentarily forgotten about Hayoon. Got caught up in a dream that couldn't ever come true.

Because Jungkook had lost his dreams, had lost them because of Jimin.

What right did Jimin have to dream at all?

A hand on Jimin's shoulder startled him from his head space. A jolt of terror thrummed deep through his bones, Minwo flashing through his eyes. Blinded him, blinded him for a brief moment as he blinked, clearing a pair of black eyes from his head.

It was Hayoon.

Bile stung the back of Jimin's throat, sour with guilt as he pulled the headphones off his ears. Knew what she was going to say, what Jungkook had told her. That Jimin had been sleeping in Jungkook's bed and it was time to stop.

But Hayoon wasn't saying anything, not yet. She appeared to be struggling with her words, a dark anxiety mirrored through her gaze. One of her hands was balled into a fist in her jacket pocket, almost clutching at something. And Jimin couldn't stop himself from studying her, looking for swollen lips or kissed bruises or tangled hair.

"Thank you," she murmured.

Jimin's mind fuzzed out of reality, having not expected those to be the words to come out of her mouth. Thought she might be leading up to something nasty, ready to draw a line, cut Jimin off. That's what Minwo had done to anyone who'd interacted with him, after all. That's what Jimin expected.

"He's doing a lot better than I thought he would," Hayoon continued with a tiny nod to herself. Her hand fell from Jimin's shoulder, slipping into her other pocket. "Thank you for helping him."

Jimin blinked up at her, a faint whisper of music drifting from the headphones in his lap. And something about her was too familiar. Now that they were face to face, he thought he'd seen her somewhere before, not just from Jungkook's bed.

"I, um… I've gotta go." Hayoon shifted from foot to foot, her petite figure taking a few steps back from where Jimin sat, staring up at her in a daze, confused as hell. "Just… thank you."

And with that, Hayoon left.

And Jimin, after watching her leave, decided he couldn't sleep without his blanket. So he went upstairs after mustering the courage for long enough. Hesitated for far too long outside Jungkook's door before slipping inside.

Jungkook looked up at Jimin a little too quickly, and Jimin noticed that like Hayoon, Jungkook didn't look fucked out or kiss-bitten. Didn't look at all like he'd just spent 3 hours in bed with a lover. But Jimin couldn't think about that, still couldn't.

Either way, Jimin didn’t end up sleeping on the couch that night.

Chapter End Notes

thank you for all the love <3 i'm sorry for not responding to as many comments; i haven't really had the time. i read them and cherish them, though, and they really brighten my thoughts about my story. thank you so much for the support
(thanks anita haha, you really shouldn't leave me alone)

the same words

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jungkook woke up to two things.

The first was a tangy sweetness nipping at his tongue, cooling on his lips. He found himself searching for the answer to that flavor in the hazy in-between of waking up. Felt something poke into his bottom lip as he thought about whether it was a dream or not.

The second was a giggle.

Jungkook licked his lips, tasting what he now recognized as sweet and sour sauce. Heard that tinkling giggle again, felt Jimin's forehead thump against his chest in what he knew was the other's full-bodied laugh.

Jungkook sighed, though a smile was already tugging at his lips as his bleary eyes cracked open, immediately focusing on the mop of black hair filling his vision. How Jimin's shoulders were shaking with the effort of keeping quiet, of keeping his giggles in.

Jungkook closed his eyes as Jimin's head was tipping up, his hand coming up to hold something to Jungkook's mouth. When he felt what he knew was a french fry touch his lips, his eyes flew open, catching Jimin's wrist in an iron grip.

Their gazes met for a split second. Jimin's eyes widened at having been caught, flinching at the force of the grip on his wrist. And Jungkook's eyes flitted over the white-blue light painted over Jimin's face, igniting those cool, brown eyes. Caught in the dark blacks of his hair, bangs hanging low over his brow, full lips smooth and pink and twisting into a grin.

And then Jimin was dissolving into a crumpling laughter, eyes squinting shut, forehead knocking hard into Jungkook's collar bone. And Jungkook could only brace his hands at Jimin's shoulder blades, feeling the weight of legs tangled in his, small hands on his chest as Jimin shook with that bright, glittering laugh filled with high-pitched squeaks.

"You'll get sauce everywhere," Jungkook whined as the fry fell onto his pajama shirt, adding another dot of sauce to his collection of stains from what had become Jimin's new tried-and-true way of waking Jungkook up on the weekends.

And Jungkook blamed Taehyung for this.

If Tae hadn't shown Jimin what was one of the fastest ways of waking the maknae up, Jimin never would've started experimenting to see which sauces woke Jungkook up the quickest. Luckily, Jin hadn't shown Jimin something even more effective: pinching Jungkook's nipples. But Jin had taught Jimin how to make french fries when it had started a few weeks back, and since then Jimin got up bright and early to sneak downstairs and make some.

Jungkook kind of wished it was something healthier, because he'd gotten used to eating french fries for breakfast on the weekends.

"Get up, Jungkook-ah," Jimin said with a soft smile, wiping at his sleep-puffy eyes.

Jungkook reached up, smoothing Jimin's hair down. Jimin batted the maknae's hand away before rolling off of him, and Jungkook grunted when Jimin's elbow dug into his stomach as he was pushing himself up. Jimin apologized sheepishly, Jungkook watching as he made his way to his little box of stuff in the corner of the room.

Jimin dug out a pair of clothes to change into for the day, including a hoodie Jungkook knew had been stolen from his closet.

"Isn't that mine?" Jungkook mumbled, sleep still laced through his voice as he stretched out across the bed, filling his muscles with a delicious ache as he yawned.

Jimin looked at the hoodie in his hands, holding it out in front of him and studying it. "Is it?"

Jungkook rolled his eyes, scoffing lightly as he tried to keep his mind working, gears turning, before he fell asleep again. "You act innocent every time I catch you."

Jimin laughed, the confused expression falling away as he made his way back over to the bed, plucking up the sauce-covered french fry before it got lost in the sheets. "You said I could have it like two weeks ago."

Jungkook rubbed a hand over his face, yawning again, fighting the urge to pull the blankets back over himself and curl into the warmth of a sleepy spring morning. But he knew if he did that, he'd find the french fry in his mouth again. "Whatever you say," Jungkook relented with a drowsy smile.

Jimin pretended to fling the french fry at Jungkook's face, and the maknae flinched, hands reaching up to cover his eyes as his smile turned into a grin. He watched through the gaps in his fingers as Jimin's smile slipped into something more bashful before he was turning away, saying he was going to go take a shower.

"You need to shave," Jimin added over his shoulder. "Your face is a little scratchy."

Jungkook threw his pillow at Jimin, but the other closed the door, the pillow flopping against wood before bouncing onto the floor. And echoing through the hallway was Jimin's giggle, shouting back that Jungkook was a brat.

The smile on Jungkook's face wouldn't go away as he laid in bed. Debated whether he should actually get up or risk falling asleep and facing Jimin's morning wrath. Eventually, he pushed himself to sit up, get ready for the day.

Since Jimin was in the shower, he made his way to the bathroom downstairs. Peered at himself in the mirror, only then realizing his hair had been sticking up about 5 inches, which explained Jimin's giggles as a french fry was shoved in his mouth.

Jimin was right, though. Jungkook brushed his fingers over the scruff shadowing his jaw, chin, and upper lip. Sighed before pulling a razor out of the cupboard, slathering shaving cream over the bottom half of his face. Pressed the blade to his skin, feeling the slide of metal over his cheeks, the whisking sound of scruff being wiped away filling his ears.

When his face was smooth and glowing once more, he rinsed off, patting his skin dry. Made his way into the kitchen.

He began making himself breakfast, a bowl of oatmeal and a banana. Unlike Jimin, who liked his oatmeal plain without anything in it, Jungkook prefered to douse his in sugar. Something Jimin had complained about before while sneaking a spoonful of Jungkook's breakfast.

Mood: The Night We Met by Lord Huron

And he thought, thought about the past few weeks. How one night of Jimin sleeping in Jungkook's bed had quickly turned into one week, then two, then three. And soon, it was just normal having Jimin in his room. It was rare to see him on the couch downstairs, and Jungkook kind of liked it when Jimin got home from work and headed straight to the maknae's room.

Jungkook's hyungs had noticed it, too.

"Jimin's been sleeping in your bed."

Jungkook's face flushed, and he found himself looking down at his bowl of plain oatmeal as he thought back to the conversation he'd had with Yoongi just last week.

"Be careful, Jungkook-ah."

"Why?"

"I know you're having a difficult time with GCF's decision, but you shouldn't forget that Jimin needs time to heal."

Jungkook's head snapped up to look at his hyung, seeing the way Yoongi was leaned back against the counter, coffee mug in hand, headphones around his neck. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Yoongi sighed, his feline eyes dark beneath his black bangs. "Just be careful. I don't want either of you to get hurt."

"We're not having sex, hyung," Jungkook muttered, knowing what Yoongi had been getting at. "It's just sleeping."

"All the same, you need to give him time."

"Time to heal; I know."

"Jungkook-ah," Yoongi pressed. "I haven't seen Hayoon around, and for once you're not coming home with hickeys after visiting her. You stopped sleeping with her, right?"

Jungkook nodded, irritation swelling in his chest. "We both decided it wasn't working anymore. We're just friends."

Yoongi was quiet for a moment, staring at Jungkook through the steam wafting up from his coffee cup. "Just… Jimin, I've been where he is. I know a little bit about how he feels right now, and while he may seem happier, you have to realize he's probably still hurting just as much as the day he got here."

Jimin *had* been happier. Had been smiling and laughing more freely, had started eating his meals, his cheeks gaining back a healthy glow. But that didn't mean Jimin was healed; didn't mean he was even close to healing. He still had a long ways to go, and Jungkook knew that.

"And you, too, Jungkook-ah. You took a really hard hit with GCF's decision. I want you to heal, too. I want you to be okay and happy before you jump into anything."

Jungkook didn't say anything to that, didn't know what to say.

"I know he trusts you a lot, and I know that you trust him… but you two need to be careful. Just promise me you won't get involved with him."

Even though a voice inside him had wanted to speak up, point out that there was nothing between him and Jimin, he knew he couldn't rule out Yoongi's warning completely.

Because Minwo… Jungkook couldn't forget. Couldn't forget the oily darkness the video had coated over his skin. Couldn't forget the way Jimin's body had slumped to the ground amidst shattered glass, blood speckling hardwood. And he couldn't forget that'd been Jimin's life for a year, maybe longer since the abuse had probably started before Jimin had even moved in with Minwo.

And Jungkook knew they were both hurting, both wrecked. And despite how much he loved holding Jimin in his arms, feeling his warmth beside him in his bed, he couldn't. And so he'd been trying his damn best to keep his stirring feelings distanced, locked up and away.

It was difficult.

Because when Jimin woke up in the morning, his face was puffy; always. Eyes all cute and squinted, his cheeks squishy and pinchable. And Jungkook sometimes couldn't help the swell of happiness in his chest, just watching Jimin wake up.

And Jimin's voice when he first woke up, it was raspy and low and fucking sexy as hell: something Jungkook always dreamed about the night before, excited to hear it the next morning. And Jimin's hair, it always stuck up, and it was Jungkook's job of smoothing it down, running fingers through trickling black locks.

When Jimin had his nightmares, it was Jungkook's arms that held him, even through the worst of it. It was his job to wipe the tears from Jimin's terror-stricken face. His job to hold Jimin and soothe him and cuddle him back to sleep. It was Jungkook's responsibility.

"Jungkook-ah, did you see where I put my backpack?"

Jungkook looked up from his bowl of cereal, realizing Jimin had somehow snuck into the dining room without him realizing. He looked Jimin up and down, taking in the notes of clean, fruity shampoo drifting into his senses. Jimin's wet, spiky hair and bare face and black hoodie. Jimin's eyes were flitting around the front room, searching for his lost backpack.

Just as he was turning to look back at Jungkook, the maknae raised his phone and snapped a picture.

Jimin huffed, swatting Jungkook's arm. "I told you to stop doing that."

Jungkook grinned, looking over the photo before making a mental note to sort it into the file of photos just like it. Photos taken in a passing moment; snapshots plucked out of a timeline, pinned into little squares for Jungkook to appreciate later.

"I'll delete it."

Jimin just shook his head, smiling a little, apples of his cheeks blooming a dusted pink. "You always say that."

Jungkook shrugged, turning his phone off before spooning his overly sweetened oatmeal into his mouth. "You look like a porcupine."

Jimin shook his head, wet, spiky bangs smoothing down a little. "Have you seen my backpack?"

Jungkook tilted his head to the side, glancing up at the ceiling as he thought. "Didn't you let Jin-hyung borrow it?"

"Did I?"

"I'm pretty sure I saw him with it last night when he got home from work."

"From work?"

Jungkook nodded.

"Aish, he never asks."

"Why do you need it? Do you have to work at Tony's today."

"I agreed to help Tony out a little later." Jimin stepped up next to where Jungkook sat at the kitchen counter, taking the spoon and scooping some oatmeal into his mouth. Jungkook watched in amusement as Jimin cringed, smacking his lips as if he'd just eaten something sour.

"It's too sweet," Jimin complained. Jungkook stole the spoon back, poking Jimin in the stomach

with it. Jimin laughed, shoving the spoon away, patting his tummy. “I’m going to go get my backpack from Jin-hyung. I have to leave by ten.”

Jungkook watched as Jimin left, feet padding softly across the tiled floor of the kitchen, disappearing down the hall. And Jungkook found his eyes travelling to the painting Jimin had made, hung next to a few Tae had done.

And maybe nobody else would understand what it meant, but Jungkook did. He saw the pink hair in the center of the flower, the frailness of the stem, black and white. Saw the light blues in the beginning of the petals, thinking back to Jimin’s fuzzy jacket. The dark blue, speckled with white to look like stars, Jungkook thought might be snow or something.

And he still had dreams. Not of Jimin standing on his porch, but of the pink-haired young man in his house. He’d let Jimin in, after all.

He often thought back to that moment. The moment his cell phone had rang all those months ago. And he didn’t regret any of the nasty words they’d spat at each other, didn’t regret the pain or hurt or confusion. Because right now, it didn’t seem to really matter anymore.

The only thing that mattered was that he’d finally seemed to forgive Jimin in his heart. For the most part. Sometimes he still found himself irritated while he was dancing, or frowning when he was out with Hayoon. But he knew now, knew for sure, that he’d forgiven Jimin.

And it was like taking that first cool, fresh breath of air after being trapped under a blanket for too long. Like coming to the surface, floating in relief and something good and light. Felt like he had before the night of the incident with the assistant.

He felt young for the first time in over a year.

Of course, there were shadows.

Seeing Minwo’s face and name stained into every media outlet in South Korea, how GCF’s new CEO had so graciously accepted his position, it stirred tar in Jungkook’s gut. Still couldn’t understand how Minwo looked so kind and honest in every picture out there. How he bowed, humble and pure, while at his first press conference as the CEO.

And then there was the video. Jungkook tried not to think about that too much, Jimin’s blood veined through his head whenever he thought back to that night.

But the USB was gone, so he didn’t dwell on it too often.

Mood: seoul by RM

Mono was a masterpiece.

Jimin had found that out right away, his little CD player tucked into his black backpack, headphones over his ears as he walked to work later that morning.

It was art, pure and simple. Filled with the ponderous thoughts of a man that definitely knew what it was like to be alone, to feel isolated and swallowed up in the city of Seoul.

Jimin decided he *had* to meet Namjoon.

He still listened to Yoongi's music on the regular, knew every line and lyric and beat in Agust D's songs by now. And he still loved them. Yoongi's songs had helped Jimin get through the darkness that had come right after leaving Minwo, the crushing depths of hurt and confusion and anger.

But RM-- Namjoon-- had unknowingly brought Jimin to a new chapter in his life, a new page turned in his story. A page Jungkook had offered, coming home from shopping with Jin, having bought a *Mono* album just for Jimin.

And Jimin had remembered that night by the Han River, remembered Jungkook telling him about it. So he'd stretched out across the maknae's bed, Jungkook scrolling through his phone next to him. And he'd listened. For hours, he'd listened to the songs on repeat.

Because *Mono* was about being okay with not being okay. It shifted his headspace to focus on finding happiness and filling his days with things that lifted him up, helping him work through the darkness that came with everything Minwo had made him to be.

Jimin looked up to the late morning sky, the brisk air refreshing and rejuvenating in his lungs. He studied the bustle of cars on the roads, people on the sidewalks.

With the cold air of the dawn

I secretly open my eyes

This city's harmony, it's so familiar to me

The days of my youth seem so far away

And now it's full of buildings and cars

But this is my home now (Seoul, Seoul)

Jimin smiled a little to himself, hands tucked into his jacket pockets. Stopped at a crosswalk, waiting for the light to tell him to walk even though there were no cars coming. He'd always been one to follow rules like that, and sometimes it drove his hyungs crazy. Especially Jungkook, who wanted to plow ahead, impatient and wanting to get things done.

Why do you sound like 'soul'?

What kind of soul is it that you have?

What holds me back by your side like this?

I don't even have anything to reminisce about you

And Jimin didn't know how it'd happened, Jungkook's brokenness. It scared Jimin, how devastated he still was about Minwo being the new CEO. And Jimin felt it, too. Felt how Minwo had manipulated everything, twisting Jungkook and the other head staff to see him in a different light until the last possible moment.

Minwo had done that to Jimin, too.

I'm so sick of you now

That same old ashy face of yours every day

No, no, I'm afraid of myself

'Cause I've already become a part of you

And there was the guilt. Jimin was still drowning in it, trying every single day to make it up to Jungkook for the shit he'd put the maknae through. He woke Jungkook up with french fries and went to watch Jungkook dance and dragged the maknae through downtown Seoul at night when nobody would be around to recognize the disgraced CEO.

If love and hate are the same words

I love you Seoul

If love and hate are the same words

I hate you Seoul

He laughed every time Jungkook did something silly and hurt every time Jungkook broke down late at night, consumed by articles and the onslaught of hate he received. He carved every nasty word he'd ever spat at the younger into his mind, carved it there and kept it close to remind himself. Remind himself what dues he had to pay, what things he had to make right. So he pushed his misery deep inside, covering it up for the time being. Thought sometimes the misery was gone, that he would be happy for the rest of his life, curled up in Jungkook's arms.

If love and hate are the same words

I love you Seoul

If love and hate are the same words

I hate you Seoul (Seoul)

And Jimin realized he'd been sleeping in Jungkook's bed for weeks now. That it had become normal for them. And it was better than Jimin sleeping on the couch, his little box of stuff now in Jungkook's room, his backpack often beside it.

B uses with changing landscapes even when I'm sitting still

And similar buildings actually varying a little

Scent of life that could be disgusting or not

And the cold parks pretending to be warm

And Jimin hadn't seen Hayoon. Didn't hear much of her, either; not unless it was Jungkook saying he was going out with her and that he'd be back later. And Jimin thought of how good it felt sleeping in Jungkook's arms every night, and then he thought of Hayoon. How they were probably very in love and how Jimin should keep away.

~~It still bothered Jimin. Still made him think of how she'd looked in Jungkook's bed, all flushed and breathless and beautiful. How good they looked together.~~

He knew how his heart fluttered, how his legs went a little weak, how his head turned to mush. How he felt so perfect when Jungkook held him, even though it didn't mean anything. And he knew it wasn't fair to feel any of those feelings when Jungkook already had someone. So he pressed them down, bottled them up.

He knew Jungkook just needed someone to hold, to comfort him when he broke down. Someone to be there for him like he'd been there for Jimin. Needed someone when he didn't have Hayoon.

And Jungkook had some amazing hyungs, too. Hyungs that were always looking out for the maknae, making sure he felt okay and that he was eating enough or not sinking too far into himself.

Yoongi stayed up late talking to Jungkook, making sure he had someone to speak to. Jin made sure Jungkook laughed and smiled, made sure to brighten the room when Jungkook looked too gloomy. Tae made sure to coddle Jungkook to pieces, reading him comics and taking him out on walks with Namjoon.

And Jimin. Jimin didn't quite know what he offered, but Jungkook seemed to enjoy his presence anyways, so he stayed. He stayed and looked out for Jungkook in the small ways.

People who always have to wander

And the Han Rivers that bear too much Han

And the swings that can't look at the sky on their own

And the kids all grown up, and me who's a little late

Deep down, Jimin knew it was about time to leave. He had more than enough money to get his own apartment by now, having saved every single penny he could. But the thought of moving out, of being so… so *alone,* it scared him.

He'd been alone for so long, locked up in Minwo's house. Couldn't count how many hours and days and weeks he'd sat there like a lovesick puppy, staring at the front door while he waited for his one source of socialization to get home. Couldn't begin to recount how many times he'd

scratched at his chest, heart pulsing and oozing loneliness, aching to be loved.

Jimin's lip curled in disgust as he thought about all the shit he'd put up with to please Minwo. It really, truly disgusted him. But Jimin was working on getting rid of that disgust, working on building himself up instead of tearing himself down.

He'd get there someday.

S eoul (yeah)

I love you Seoul (yeah)

I hate you Seoul (yeah)

I love you Seoul (yeah)

I hate you Seoul

Mono was a masterpiece.

And as Jimin made it to the front door of Tony's shop, he knew he would finally take Taehyung up on his offer one of these mornings. Would meet Namjoon. Meet the person who knew so much about being alone.

But for now, he continued on, backpack slung over his shoulders and headphones stuffed into his ears.

Chapter End Notes

> as always, thank you for reading. i was really nervous with this chapter because i know it kinda skipped a few weeks, disrupting the slow pace of their relationship a bit... but i hope it's okay?

lie and lie

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jimin practically moaned as Hoseok pressed his thumbs just right into the stressed nerve in his neck. Tilted his head to the side, granting Hobi better access, urging him to continue. And the dancer did, kneading and rubbing into Jimin's neck and shoulders as everyone around them continued with their card game.

Jungkook, Jin, and Tae were seated on the floor around the coffee table, which had been dragged into the center of the room. Jimin was sitting on the couch next to Hoseok, back turned to the dancer. Yoongi was sitting on the arm chair on the other side of the room, too stiff to be natural, paying too close attention to his phone.

Every now and then Yoongi would look up, and Jimin knew he'd caught Hoseok's gaze. Both of them would flush a little, going back to whatever they'd been doing, acting like they hadn't been eyefucking each other all night. It was infuriating, really.

Jimin saw why Jungkook and Tae teased Yoongi so relentlessly.

"UNO," Jin announced, pointing his singular card at both Jungkook and Tae, laughing gleefully. "UNO, UNO, UNO!"

Jungkook punched Jin's shoulder, and the elder immediately whined about how the maknae was mean. Jungkook just grinned, eyes crinkled in the corners, gleaming with mirth. Jimin felt all warm again, found a smile tugging at his own lips as he watched Jungkook play a draw four card directed at Jin.

Jin stared at the card, at a loss for words. "Brat," he grumbled, drawing four cards, pouting more than Jimin thought humanly possible.

"Hyung?" Tae asked, his own boxy grin tugging up the corners of his mouth. He laid down a plus four card.

Jin's mouth dropped open, his ears starting to turn bright red. Jimin covered his mouth as he laughed, bright and tinkling, leaning back into Hosoek to support himself. And then Jin started in on it again, obviously only ranting for the sake of entertaining everyone. But Jimin laughed anyways, usually the only one that laughed at all. But he didn't care because he felt free to laugh here.

Jungkook was watching Jimin.

Jimin felt heat bloom in his chest, the laugh dying on his lips. Saw the soft smile on Jungkook's face, the look Jungkook got whenever Jimin smiled or laughed in general. And Jimin returned it, feeling a little too shy.

"Jungkook-ah," Tae said a second time, waving a hand in front of the maknae's face.

Jungkook blinked, gaze flitting away from Jimin. He continued with his turn, and Jimin watched as the game continued on, the three of them playing for another twenty minutes before anyone actually won.

And looking around the room, Jimin felt… he felt so good here. Was good the right word? Felt happier than he'd felt in so long. Was beginning to feel alive again, heart beating and strong in his chest. The chains around his shoulders weren't as heavy, as cold.

And when he looked at the people surrounding him right there, right then, he knew they weren't just Jungkook's hyungs anymore; they were Jimin's, too. They had become somewhat of a family, and Jimin loved them so much his heart hurt. Hurt to think it was almost time to let them go.

"Let's do syllable poems," Jin suggested.

Tae stood up from where he'd been sitting on the floor, stretching his hands above his head as he yawned. He mumbled something about them going on without him as he scratched at his tummy, walking over to where Jimin and Hoseok sat on the couch. He curled up right next to them, and a light flickered in Jimin's chest at the thought that Tae felt so comfortable around him because the other 95'er was laying his head on Jimin's shoulder, already dozing off.

"Wah, you guys never want to spend time with me," Jin complained.

"We just played UNO with you for an hour," Jungkook pointed out.

Jin puckered out his bottom lip, his ears still red with irritation. "Let's do syllable poems, Jungkook-ah."

"I'll play, too," Jimin piped up, not sure why.

Jungkook smiled at that, suddenly eager to join the game. And Jin noticed, Jimin thought, because the oldest hyung was rolling his eyes, muttering a little "seriously" under his breath. Jimin ran his fingers through Tae's hair, absentmindedly cuddling in closer between the 95'er and Hoseok.

"Maybe since the three of us are the only ones that want to play, we should do arm wrestling."

"No-" Jimin started.

"The loser can-"

"I'm the weakest here," Jimin laughed, shaking his head.

"The loser can become a slave for the others," Jin finished.

"Seriously," Jimin cracked up, eye smile swallowing his vision. "That's like a command."

"In English, it's called 'slave,'" Jungkook added helpfully.

Jimin shook his head, trying his best not to curl forward as he laughed, not wanting to disturb Tae. "No, no. Since the three of us are here-"

"Arm wrestling," Jin cut in, blinking at Jimin with a blank look on his face. "We can do arm wrestling.

Jimin laughed, cupping a hand over his mouth. "So irritating."

"How can you say I'm irritating?" Jin pouted.

Jimin sighed, shaking his head, smile hurting his cheeks. "We were going to do syllable poems?"

"Yah, you're right," Jin nodded. "Let's do syllable poems. Starting letter of our names. J, J, J. Let's

do that. You go first."

Jungkook's eyes flitted from Jimin to Jin, and Jimin laughed as the maknae sat up a little straighter, getting defensive. "Why do I go last?"

"You're the youngest," Jin said with a tone of finality. "How old are you?"

"Younger than you," Jungkook sassed back. "In your old age."

"Don't fight." Jimin shook his head, already protesting because he knew once those two started at it, there was no stopping them. Yoongi rolled his eyes on the other side of the room, sinking further down in his chair, exasperated. Hoseok's little laugh echoed in Jimin's ear, and a sleepy smile stretched over Tae's face.

"You know what? I love it!" Jin snapped back at Jungkook, the maknae already grinning. "I'm so happy I'm old!"

"Ecstatic, right?"

"Yeah, old age is really good!"

"Really?" Jungkook asked.

"So irritating," Jimin laughed again as they continued arguing. "I'll just do it on my own."

"You guys are so loud," Yoongi grumbled from where he sat.

"No, we're quiet as a lamb," Jin immediately protested.

"Syllable poems," Jimin stressed. "Continue what I say."

"Okay. J, J, J."

Both Jungkook and Jin were staring at Jimin as he started his line, thinking about what to say. And the way Jungkook was looking at Jimin, as if Jimin was the only person in the room… it flustered Jimin just a little bit, sent a shot of heat right through him.

"Jimin… was walking down a street," Jimin said.

There was a pause, and Jin's brows were raised, expectant. "Is that all?"

Jimin just looked at Jin, not bothering to add on.

"Jimin," Jin started, "was looking beautiful walking down the street."

"I already said that," Jimin huffed, not bothering to pay attention to the way Jungkook's face flushed a little.

"Can't I repeat?"

"Jimin-" Jungkook began his turn.

"Looked beautiful walking down the street," Jin insisted, even as Jungkook started denying that's what he was going to say.

Jimin buckled forward, dissolving into giggles, sandwiching Tae in his lap. Tae didn't complain or

anything, his eyes cracking open as Jimin squeaked a little with his laughs, unable to hold himself up. And Hoseok was looking so fondly at Jimin, eyes shining as he laughed a little, too.

“No, that’s not what I was going to say,” Jungkook enforced a little quieter, still staring at Jimin.

They continued with the syllable poems for a few more minutes before everyone in the room seemed to just give up. Tae was fast asleep in Jimin’s lap, Hoseok playing on his phone on Jimin’s other side. Yoongi had his headphones in, pointedly ignoring the entire room, and Jin had wandered into the kitchen to find some food for himself.

And Jimin watched Jungkook. Jungkook, who was fidgeting with his fingers, still staring shyly at the ground. And Jimin refused to believe the beating in his chest was what he thought it was. Refused to believe it, because how could he trust anything he felt? How could he after Minwo?

Jimin felt shame burning hot and alive in his stomach. Felt shame because he wanted more, even after all the shit he’d put Jungkook through. And he felt like maybe he’d always wanted more, and maybe Minwo had seen that. Felt like he was cheating on Minwo, even though it’d been months now since he’d even seen his ex.

What would Minwo say if he knew about Jimin and Jungkook? If he knew they shared a bed every night, holding each other? That they drove through town and explored a different part of Seoul every weekend? That they sometimes looked into each other’s eyes and couldn’t look away, and their looks alone set Jimin’s soul on fire?

What would Minwo say if he saw Jimin’s thoughts?

Handcuffs flashed in the back of Jimin’s mind and he shuddered, absently rubbing at his wrists. He didn’t know where they’d gone, what Jungkook had done with them, but Jimin still dreamt about them sometimes, still thought about being chained to that punching bag.

“Jimin-ah?” Tae asked.

Jimin glanced down at the other 95’er, saw how Tae had been peering up at him. Jimin quickly wiped away whatever expression had been on his face, replacing it with a smile. “Yeah?”

Tae’s eyes flitted over Jimin’s face for a second, still trying to decipher Jimin’s mood. And Jimin suddenly remembered Tae’s offer from when he’d first gotten there: to go on a morning walk with him and Namjoon. And Jimin had been listening to Mono nonstop, wanted to meet RM more than anything.

“Are you going on a walk with Namjoon soon?” Jimin asked.

“I think so. You want to come?”

Jimin ran a hand through Tae’s hair, briefly glancing up at Jungkook. “If the offer still stands.”

A boxy smile took over Tae’s face. “Of course it does.”

“Then I’ll plan on it.”

“Jungkook-ah, come here,” Yoongi muttered, voice low.

Jungkook’s eyes snapped away from Jimin, from watching as he disappeared upstairs for the night.

Hoseok had just barely left, Yoongi seeing him out, and Jin and Tae had gone to bed just before Jimin had announced he was.

“What is it?”

Yoongi was standing next to the front door, hand lingering on the handle as he held a stack of photos in his hand. His face was a mask of passive calm, and yet there was something pitch black in his hyung’s eyes that scared him. He stood from where he’d been sitting on the floor and made his way over to Yoongi.

And right there on top of the stack of photos was a dark, grainy picture. But Jungkook didn’t have to study it for longer than a second to recognize it. It was a picture of him and Jimin sleeping by the Han River. Because that, that was Jimin’s red beanie and striped shirt, and the dark form Jimin was curled up against was himself.

Jungkook grabbed the photos from Yoongi’s hands, flipping through them. There were at least a dozen pictures, all of them from that night. Some of them through the front window, him and Jimin looking through a photo album on the couch. Another of them leaving and getting into the car. A dozen of them wandering through downtown Seoul.

And on the back of the last photo-- a picture of them looking into each other’s eyes, the lit up bridge spanning the length of the Han River in the background-- there was a note.

He'll lie and lie and then he'll run.

Chapter End Notes

> so... im in a really intensive study abroad program right now and I honestly cannot promise frequent updates.. i will post the next chapter within the week but it’s a bitch to edit on a phone cause I don’t have my laptop haha... anyways, thank you all so much for sticking with me :)

your ocean eyes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: uhgood by RM

Jimin didn't like looking in the mirror.

Because his reflection, it spoke. Spoke of black eyes and whispered lies, soft lips trailing the nape of his neck as his forehead pressed into the fabric of a punching bag. Threw those moments back in his face, reminding him what he'd let happen.

Today wasn't a good day.

Jimin had a lot of good days, so many now that sometimes he forgot to let himself hurt. Forgot to slow down and ease his heart and take a breath. So many good days he realized he'd forgotten the last time he was so happy. It had been years, really, since he'd felt so good.

So he didn't understand why he still had days like this. Days where looking in the mirror was a challenge and meeting his own gaze was near impossible. Where he was ashamed of the eyes that looked back, of the person in the mirror, of the person he was. Didn't understand at all.

Often times, he couldn't help the frustration choking at his throat. Couldn't help but press himself into the bathroom walls, silent and gasping, trying to flee the cutting, reflective glass. Wanted to rip his body apart and sew it back up, make it good and better and new.

It was hard looking in the mirror, seeing all the tears and broken pieces. Pieces that never should've been broken, pieces that should've mended by now. It'd been four months after all. Four months of living with Jungkook and his hyungs, of throwing himself back into working and dancing and smiling.

Sometimes he clawed at those broken pieces, scrambling to fit them together, patch them up or cast them out. But they were stubborn, stubbornly a part of him. And he hated it, hated that he couldn't just get over what had happened and move on forever.

So standing in front of a mirror, staring back at his reflection, he took himself in. Took in the blonde hair and plain brown eyes. His slightly filled out cheeks and his crooked front tooth. Looked himself up and down, seeing the shadow of bruises that had once dotted his body like a canvas.

"You're worthy," Jimin whispered desperately, repeating the mantra he'd come up with for days like this. "You're worthy of living. You're worthy--" Jimin swallowed hard, forcing himself to meet his own gaze head on. "You're worthy of love." A tiny nod, a false determination he'd conjured if only to make himself believe it later on. "You're worth it."

Lies.

Jimin shook his head, again and again.

He'll lie and lie and then he'll run.

"You're worthy of… of living."

Little bitch, little whore, little fucking liar.

“You’re worthy,” Jimin sneered at his reflection, angry tears hot on his cheeks as he scratched at his arms. “You’re worthy of--”

You’re ungrateful. I gave you everything.

“No,” Jimin almost growled at himself. “Fuck you. *Fuck you.”*

Little fucking liar. Little slut, huh?

“You’re worthy of love,” Jimin gritted out as he turned away from the mirror, pressing his cheek into the cold wall. Scrubbed a palm over his eye, hating so much that he even had to tell himself that. But he did it with the hope that one day it would sink in.

“Even if it’s not today, and even if it’s not tomorrow,” Jimin reminded himself, “It’s okay. It’s okay not to love yourself yet.”

Yet being the key word, Yoongi had said.

It’d gotten worse since Jungkook had shown him the pictures. Since Jimin had seen the grainy photos of him and the maknae curled up on the grass by the Han River, sleeping peacefully in each other’s arms. Since he’d learned Minwo had followed them that night, had been there the whole time. It was a cold breath down Jimin’s neck, a chisel against a glass vase, a monster under his bed.

“We’re putting in security cameras,” Jungkook had assured him that night a month previous. *“He won’t get away with this again.”*

But Minwo found a way around everything. That’s a truth that had engrained itself in Jimin’s being since the first day they’d met. He’d get to Jimin eventually, and he knew it was only a matter of time before the house of cards he’d so carefully built around himself came tumbling down.

“You’re worthy of living,” Jimin reminded himself once more as he pushed off from the bathroom wall, too frustrated to try and meet his gaze again. “You’re worthy of love.”

Jungkook’s heavy, panting breaths were drowned out by the boom of the music echoing through the practice room. He had been running through some choreo he’d been practicing the last few weeks, every move of his nearly perfect, sharply precise.

He was sitting on the floor, head tipped back against the wall, mirrors lining the wall across from him. He briefly saw himself before shaking his head, closing his eyes.

He was practicing night and day, trying to distract himself from everything that’d been muddling his mind the past few months. Everything from losing his position as CEO to Jimin sleeping in his bed. And he was trying, trying so hard to empty his head by working out and dancing and hanging out with Hayoon.

But no matter what he did, he always had moments like these. Slow moments where he’d exhausted his body and was left with his spinning mind.

Jimin, so beautiful in his arms. Sleeping peacefully, tucked into Jungkook’s chest. Their glasses of water were empty on the nightstand, the darkness of the room wrapped around the both of them

beneath that yellow blanket.

Jungkook sighed, running a hand through his sweaty hair, shutting his eyes harder. He was trying so desperately to keep himself from thinking of Jimin in that way.

The way Jimin had come home all bundled up in his jacket, light in his eyes and a paycheck in his hand for the first time. So excited, so happy, so bright. Jungkook had never felt so proud for anyone than he did for Jimin just then, knew how much that first paycheck had meant to him.

Jimin had been paying Jungkook a little amount each week he stayed, insisting it was to help with living expenses. So Jungkook had a stack of cash in the back of his dresser drawer that he hadn't touched, was planning on sneaking back into Jimin's wallet a little bit at a time.

What's this?

Oh, it's… it's money.

For what?

For letting me stay here. For taking me in.

Jimin…

I want to help out. I've been living here for free for long enough. Please, please accept it. Just… think of me as a renter or something.

Okay, Jimin. Okay.

Thank you.

Jimin wasn't just some random stranger that had crashed on their couch months ago. Jimin was… Jimin. He was Hoseok's best friend, Yoongi's biggest fan, Jin's mischievous partner, and Tae's near-soulmate. He was family to his hyungs. And to Jungkook, Jimin was-

Just promise me you won't get involved with him.

Jimin belonged there, and how could Jungkook accept money from him? As if he was no more than a renter? A renter that slept in Jungkook's bed, cuddling him to sleep every night?

Renter?

Fuck no.

Jungkook groaned, thunking his head back against the wall. It was getting harder every day to keep himself from falling completely in love with Jimin. And while losing his company to Minwo had definitely knocked the world out from under his feet, Jimin had been there to catch him.

And it made him so furious, thinking about what Minwo had destroyed, what he'd taken for granted. Because Jungkook wanted nothing more than to hold Jimin and kiss him and love him, but he couldn't. That was another thing Minwo had taken.

"I'll be able to move out soon," Jimin had said. "I'll have my own apartment."

"That's wonderful," Jungkook had replied, smiling and genuinely happy for Jimin. Because Jimin deserved it, his independence. Deserved a house of his own, where he didn't have to worry about someone locking him up. He would be free, and Jungkook was happy for him.

Maybe he just wasn't quite ready to let go.

"You're going to hurt your head if you keep doing that."

Jimin.

Jungkook opened his eyes, his head stopping mid-thunk. Turned to look at Jimin, who was standing in the doorway of the practice room, Hoseok peeking in behind him.

"We brought dinner," Hoseok announced.

Jimin had a grocery bag in his hand, his black backpack slung over his shoulder, still wearing his work uniform. He looked tired, having worked a 10 hour day at Tony's. But he looked good.

His now-blonde hair brought out the returning honey tint of his skin. Walking to work and back every day had turned him a little tanner, not so pale anymore, and Jungkook thought he looked even better because of it.

Jungkook licked his lips, forcing himself to look at Hoseok instead, not wanting to think about how it would feel to hold Jimin right then and there. "What'd you bring?"

"Chicken," Jimin said with a smile, both him and Hoseok making their way over to where Jungkook sat against the wall. "I hope you like the spicy kind, cause I got a lot of it."

Hoseok grumbled a bit about that, complaining about how Jimin always had to get the spiciest thing, and then wouldn't finish it after a few bites.

They sat by Jungkook, Jimin putting the bag of chicken in the middle, taking off his backpack and work jacket, setting them against the wall. Jungkook caught Jimin's gaze, offering a shy smile as Jimin smiled back.

"You look like you've been practicing hard," Jimin observed, motioning to the beads of sweat running down Jungkook's face.

Jungkook's nose crinkled as he grabbed his sweat towel, dabbing at the moisture on his face. He knew he looked gross, wanting to take a shower to get rid of the sticky perspiration cover his body. He probably didn't smell that great, either. "Something like that."

"My little Jungkookie works hard at everything," Hoseok cooed, leaning forward and pinching Jungkook's cheek.

Jungkook batted his hand away, rolling his eyes. "Stop that, hyung. I'm not a kid."

Hoseok grinned, making little aegyo noises at the maknae, tussling his hair. Jungkook groaned, honestly too tired to put up much of a real fight. He was bigger and stronger than Hoseok, and usually he'd just pick his hyung up and throw him. But for now, he just waited until Hoseok got distracted by Jimin opening up the carton of chicken, a savory, mouth-watering scent wafting into the air.

They dug into the food, not really talking after that. Jungkook had turned the practice music down a lot, background noise at this point. But he didn't fail to notice how Jimin would subconsciously tap his fingers or bounce his leg to the music.

After a while of watching this with a small smile on his lips, Jungkook couldn't help himself anymore. "Hyung, you used to dance, right?"

Jimin swallowed his mouthful of chicken, biting his bottom lip as he looked to Hoseok. Hobi just shrugged his shoulders, nodding his head towards Jungkook.

“I, uh… yeah. I used to dance a lot.” Jimin shifted a bit, running a hand through his blond hair. “I was only a couple months shy of graduating with a dance major.”

Jungkook didn’t have to ask why Jimin hadn’t graduated. And a bolt of shyness struck through him, his heart quivering with nerves because he’d always imagined what it’d look like to see Jimin dance. See his lithe body, smooth and fluid, flowing to a beat. And so he asked. “Hyung… will you dance for me?”

Jimin’s eyes widened, his face flushing a little as he bit his lip, looking to Hoseok. “I, um… I haven’t danced in front of anyone in a long time.”

“I want to see you dance,” Jungkook murmured, gazing at Jimin.

Jimin was frozen, eyes locked on the maknae, but eventually he nodded, slowly pushing himself to stand. “Can I borrow your phone?”

Jungkook handed his phone over to Jimin, their fingers brushing as he did so. Watched Jimin type in the search bar, looking for a song. And then he gave it back to Jungkook, and the maknae watched as Jimin wiped his sweaty palms on his pants, walking out into the middle of the practice room and facing the mirrors.

“I’m not warmed up or anything,” Jimin warned.

And Jungkook could see it, the experience. Could see that Jimin had been in a practice room a million times before by the way his eyes were completely focused on himself in the mirror. And before the moment could be broken, Jungkook pressed play on the song, the beginning chords stringing out through the bluetooth speakers.

Jimin was still for a moment, just breathing in the music, feeling the beat. And then he moved. And Jungkook’s mouth dropped open, his eyes widening as he watched Jimin drop like a broken puppet on strings.

And as the harsh beat of the song pounded through the room, Jungkook realized he’d been wrong. From the dance style, he could tell Jimin had some form of contemporary training, but from the dance itself, there was no such softness.

Jimin’s dance wasn’t soft and beautiful and fluid. It was angry. So much pent up rage trapped in his limbs it scared the maknae. Watched the fury shiver out into the air around them, the hard look on Jimin’s face as he kept his own gaze in the mirror. Dark, powerful, intense.

Terrifying, yet beautiful.

And Jimin, he was so strong when he danced. Jungkook could see his form was a little shaky, going easier on his body because he wasn’t warmed up, but there was such a strength there.

A strength that’d been there all along.

It was over before it began, and Jimin was breathing a little hard in the silence of the room, sweat beginning to head across his brow. But he made his way back over to Jungkook and Hoseok like nothing had happened, like he hadn’t just blown Jungkook’s mind away.

“Aish… I really need to warm up next time,” Jimin muttered as he made to sit next to them. “And

not eat before I dance."

Jungkook nodded a little numbly, still staring at Jimin, trying to process everything. "You helped Hoseok-hyung create *Hope on the Street?"*

Jimin looked over to Hoseok, some unspoken memories passing between them. Hoseok smiled a mischievous smile, leaning over and bumping their shoulders together. "We started it in junior high, didn't we, Jiminie?"

Jimin blushed a little, smacking Hoseok's arm. "We don't talk about those days."

"What was wrong with junior high?" Jungkook asked, looking between the two of them.

Jimin buried his face in his hands as Hoseok whipped out his phone, smirk lighting his features. He scrolled and tapped at his phone for a bit as Jimin warned Jungkook not to look, an adorable pout on his face. And when Hoseok had found what he was looking for, he turned the phone to show Jungkook, Jimin trying to grab the phone out of Hoseok's hands.

It was a picture of Jimin from when he must've been 15 or 16. His skin was darkened with a tan, a warm mocha brown. His hair was as black as it'd been weeks previous, and he was wearing a pair of unstylish, wire-framed glasses. And his cheeks. It was like when Jimin woke up in the morning, his face puffy from sleep, but that's what they must've looked like all the time back then.

Jimin was *adorable.*



Jungkook's head tipped back as he laughed, taking the phone from Hoseok's hands. He clutched at his stomach, quickly running out of air as he wheezed and squeaked, kicking at the floor. Because Jimin was just so cute and puffy and small, and Jungkook wanted to print the picture out and tape it up in his room.

His eyes watering, he glanced down at the picture again, smile staining his cheeks. And Jimin was sitting across from him, arms folded over his stomach, glaring.

“You don’t have to laugh so much,” Jimin mumbled, cheeks on fire, obviously embarrassed.

Jungkook finally surrendered the phone back to Hoseok, who had been laughing right along with him. “You were so cute, though.”

“I was ugly,” Jimin pouted, picking at a piece of chicken with his chopsticks.

And Jungkook’s amusement guttered at that, because even though Jimin was talking about himself in the picture, it almost sounded like he still believed it. That he was ugly.

“You’re not ugly,” Jungkook murmured, dipping his head down a little to catch Jimin’s gaze, forgetting about Hoseok for a second.

Jimin’s blush darkened, his eyes fixed on the chopsticks in his hand as he fiddled around some more. “I’m not handsome, though.”

Jimin *was* handsome, in a different kind of way. Beautifully handsome, if that made any sense. But he felt weird calling Jimin beautiful in front of Hoseok, thought it would come across as too forward, too revealing. “You *are* handsome,” he assured Jimin.

“Oh, Jimin-ah, come on. You’re handsome,” Hoseok echoed, nudging Jimin’s shoulder again.

Jimin’s blush was still burning, but he didn’t look so pouty anymore, the embarrassment ebbing away. “Whatever. You want to show him *your* school pictures?”

Hoseok quickly shook his head, laughing. “No, never. I burned those a long time ago.”

“That’s what I thought,” Jimin muttered with a roll of the eyes.

Jungkook felt a little bad about laughing at Jimin’s picture now, even though it was just because Jimin was so adorable. So he did something he knew he would regret. He pulled out his phone, tapping around until he found what he was looking for. And then he turned his phone around to show Jimin.



They had to carry Jimin home that night because he couldn't stop laughing.

Mood: ocean eyes by BIllie Eilish

Jungkook was almost asleep when Jimin snorted, another fit of laughter crumpling his body. Jungkook was now the one pouting, swatting Jimin's arm lightly. "It's not *that* funny."

Jimin buried his face in Jungkook's chest, hands curling into his shirt as he bit his lip, trying not to laugh. "I'm sorry, Jungkook-ah… you're… you were just so… so-"

"I get it," Jungkook groaned. "You know, I only showed you that picture because I felt bad about laughing at yours."

Jimin's body was literally trembling with giggles, tears of laughter soaking Jungkook's pajama shirt. Jungkook's legs were entwined with Jimin's, the maknae's arm wrapped over him, the other arm propping his head up on his pillow as he continued pouting.

"I'm sorry," Jimin sniffled, nuzzling his nose more into Jungkook's shirt. "I'm sorry."

"You're really not," Jungkook complained.

Jimin pulled away, looking up into Jungkook's eyes as the maknae stroked his hand up and down Jimin's waist. Jimin smiled, knocking Jungkook's heart into overdrive, the room suddenly too hot, too small. Because Jimin was smiling so freely at him, so gorgeously. And he'd never wanted to kiss Jimin so badly.

“You were lying when you said I was handsome.” Jimin poked his finger into Jungkook’s shoulder. “I have a right to laugh.”

Jungkook bit his lip, eyes falling to the sliver of bed between them. He could feel the blood rushing to his face, his heart thundering and thundering. “I wasn’t lying.”

“But you hesitated,” Jimin persisted. “You had to think for a minute before agreeing.”

Jungkook had gotten the sense over the past couple weeks that Jimin was a little more sensitive about his looks and body than he liked to let on. And it made Jungkook think back to a week or two ago, when everyone had been gathered around for a movie night.

Hoseok had been over, had been sipping at a protein drink, Jimin eyeing it all night. And when the dancer had offered Jimin some, there was something in Jimin’s entire demeanor that had shifted. His face going pale, his hand slowly going to clutch at his stomach as if he wanted to vomit.

And Jungkook still remembered exactly how Jimin had excused himself, throwing that protein drink one last cursory glance before disappearing for the rest of the night.

It was something to do with Minwo, Jimin had confessed a little later in the darkness of night. Jungkook hadn’t pressed for more details, but he could only guess why a protein drink would make Jimin spend an hour in the bathroom gagging.

“I hesitated because I’m not good with words,” Jungkook murmured, brushing a few locks of blonde hair off Jimin’s brow. Counted the moles dotted across his forehead. “You *are* handsome. Just… just in a different way…”

Jimin seemed to shrink back a little at those words. “You don’t have to sugarcoat it, Jungkook. You can just tell me I’m ugly. It doesn’t hurt me.”

“Jimin… you’re not ugly. Why would you say you’re ugly?”

Jimin was quiet, then, looking up into Jungkook’s eyes. Cool, coffee brown, dark and glittering and so full of life now. Not healed, but healing. And Jungkook saw it in his eyes, saw the insecurity was a seed that’d been planted by Minwo.

“I know I’m not handsome. And every man wants to be called handsome… can you blame me?” Jimin asked, voice soft and small.

Jungkook looked at Jimin. Just looked. Eyes flitted over Jimin’s face, from his full lips to his ocean eyes. Jungkook had never thought of Jimin as handsome; beautiful had always been the first word to come to mind. So he said so. “You’re handsome-- you are-- but you’re… I’ve always found you… I don’t know, I’ve always found you more...beautiful… than handsome.”

Jungkook cringed inwardly as soon as he said it, knowing how stupid it must have sounded to Jimin. But he was sincere about it, made sure Jimin knew that by his tone, keeping Jimin’s gaze. And Jimin, his eyes widened a fraction, glassy and faraway.

“You think I’m beautiful?”

Jungkook nodded, suddenly feeling very shy.

“Even though I’m not working out?”

Jungkook’s shyness was short, confusion quickly muddling his thoughts. “What does that have to

do with anything?"

Jimin shrugged a little, cheeks rosy. "Just wondering."

Jungkook thought back to that winter night when Jimin had turned up at his doorstep, shivering and bruised. Thought back to how toned and muscled Jimin had been, almost unnaturally so. "You *are* beautiful, Jimin," he whispered. "And if you want me to call you handsome, I will. But you should know that… that you're the most beautiful man I've ever seen."

Jungkook's toes curled with how timid he felt. He refused to meet Jimin's gaze, not wanting to see Jimin laugh at him. Just waited for it. Because he'd never said any words like that to any of his past girlfriends, or even Hayoon. So he was preparing himself for the blow of a laugh.

Because Jimin's eyes were widening, and he was looking at Jungkook as if he couldn't ever look away. And Jungkook was just waiting for it, waiting for Jimin to reject the maknae's words and laugh in his face.

He wasn't expecting Jimin to kiss him.

Jimin's full lips were soft and warm against his own, palm cupping Jungkook's jaw. And Jungkook was frozen, his mind blank, heart sputtering as Jimin's lips pressed against his. And a curl of heat licked through Jungkook's body, his face on fire and electricity zinging through his fingertips as they slowly came up, hovering over Jimin's neck. And then it ended all too soon, Jimin pulling back.

Jimin's eyes were filled with uncertainty, overflowing with a stark terror that shot right through Jungkook's chest. "Fuck, I'm sorry… I didn't-- I mean-- I should've asked or something…" Jimin moaned, looking horrified. "Sorry, I'm sorry…" Jimin whispered. "God, I'm sorry. That was stupid. I didn't-"

"You didn't mean to kiss me?" Jungkook asked, his heart sinking.

"No, I did… I did..."

"Then what's wrong?"

Jimin eyes flitted over Jungkook's face, gauging the maknae's expression with such an intense scrutiny that Jungkook wanted to shrink back. But he didn't. He couldn't.

Jungkook cradled the back of Jimin's head, fingers threading through his blonde hair. Because he'd been wanting to kiss Jimin for too long, and he didn't want to let it slip away like this. So he slowly, carefully tugged Jimin's head forward, keeping his gaze as he planted a soft peck on Jimin's lips.

Jimin's eyes fluttered closed, Jungkook pulling back just a fraction, waiting for Jimin to tell him it was wrong, that they couldn't do this. But Jimin didn't say anything, closing the tiny gap once more with another kiss. And this time, Jungkook wasn't frozen with surprise. This time he kissed Jimin, and Jimin kissed him back.

Lips so smooth, the darkness dimming low as their lips met. And it was years of longing, of wanting to do just this. And Jungkook's head was hazy with everything that was Jimin; he was so in awe, so overwhelmed because Jimin was so pretty, so lovely in the moonless room.

Warm, everything in Jungkook's chest was warm as he pulled back a little, rubbing their noses together. Brushed a thumb over Jimin's rosy cheek, eyes cracked open, cool brown glimmering in

the underlit room. He rubbed the tip of his nose against Jimin's one more time before dipping back in, pecking Jimin's lips over and over. Couldn't get enough, never enough.

And kissing Jimin's full bottom lip, his hands so carefully bracing the sides of Jimin's face, he felt Jimin's thigh slotting through his legs. Felt Jimin's fingertips curling up his jaw, brushing the curves of his ears: so soft, so quiet.

They laid there for a while, just kissing. Feeling each other, hands slow and hot, the room around them forgotten. And it was more than anything Jungkook had ever imagined. His existence was on fire, his soul burning in his veins, and he never wanted this to end. Wanted to kiss Jimin to the ends of the world.

When he pulled away their hands were entwined, the apples of Jimin's cheeks dusted darker in the cool blues of night. Jimin reached his free hand up, brushing his fingertips over Jungkook's lips, eyes focused on the maknae's mouth.

"Jungkook…"

Jungkook hummed, mind still short-circuiting.

"What about Hayoon?"

Everything slammed back into stark reality as Jungkook's world spun back to the present, as he realized Jimin would still think he and Hayoon were hooking up. Because in the past weeks, Jungkook hadn't bothered to mention it at all, and for all Jimin knew Hayoon was probably Jungkook's girlfriend or something.

And from the shame in Jimin's downcast eyes, Jungkook knew. He just *knew* Jimin was thinking about Minwo. About how that bastard had kept him silenced for a year, locked up for another one.

"No, no, no… Jimin," Jungkook whispered, smoothing his hand up and down Jimin's arm. "Hayoon and I, we aren't... God, it's a little complicated, but we don't do that anymore. We haven't in months now."

Jimin still didn't look convinced. But at least he was keeping Jungkook's gaze, hearing him out.

"She… Hayoon, she's the assistant's sister."

Jimin's eyes shot wide, his mouth dropping open just the tiniest bit. "What?"

Jungkook nodded a little, forcing himself to face Jimin's shock. "We, uh… we met through the trials and everything. Our first time was just after that night in the courthouse, when I caught you and Minwo. I was lost and confused and angry with everything that was going on, and so was she. It just sort of happened."

Jimin pushed away an inch or two, and any little bit of distance felt like a slap to the face. "So you and her… you've been sleeping with the assistant's sister?"

Jungkook bit his lip, working it between his teeth as he looked beyond Jimin's shoulder. "There's no excuse for what we did. But that night we looked through your photo album and slept by the Han River, that was the night we called it off."

Jimin's hands were warm through the material of Jungkook's shirt. And he was so close, and Jungkook felt too ashamed to look into Jimin's eyes anymore.

“I should’ve told you… I’m sorry I didn’t.”

Jimin was silent.

“Jimin? What are you thinking?”

Jimin shook his head, leaning forward and burying his face in Jungkook’s chest again. But this time he wasn’t giddy and giggling. “I can’t imagine what you must’ve felt when you found me and… me and Minwo.”

Jungkook’s fingertips brushed the smooth skin of Jimin’s exposed arm. “It’s… it’s behind us.”

Jimin shook his head against Jungkook’s chest, warmth from an exhaled breath blossoming through the maknae’s shirt. “I don’t know, Jungkook-ah. I don’t know. I think this was too soon.”

Something in Jungkook’s chest deflated, but at the same time, he knew Jimin was right. It’d only been a few months since Jimin had left Minwo, and there was no way anyone would be able to get over something like that so quickly.

“It’s okay. Let’s sleep,” Jungkook whispered, caressing Jimin’s waist to soothe him, not wanting his reaction to come off too strong. Not wanting Jimin to see the longing hurt in his gaze. “Let’s sleep.”

He pulled Jimin in close just like any other night, but this time he held Jimin just a little tighter, clinging to something he could never have. And something broke inside Jungkook. Broke because he realized he’d failed.

He’d failed because he was in love with Jimin after all.

Chapter End Notes

> i really hope this wasn't too fast... (i say 33 chapters in... haha) but really idk i hope you liked it? thank you so much for all the love and support <3
> also, a big thanks to @fxckmochi on tumblr for translating this whole story into Portuguese ;)

facing a demon

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: I.L.Y by The Rose

Apartment hunting with Jimin was actually a lot better than Jungkook thought it would be.

Of course there was a part of him that simmered, grew uneasy with each apartment they looked at. But seeing the glow in Jimin's eyes, the new-found confidence, the excitement… it was worth it. Worth every second.

"I like this one," Jimin gushed, cheeks rosy with wonder as he turned around in the living room, white walls casting a soft glow across his body.

Jungkook swallowed hard, again forcing himself to focus solely on how happy Jimin was. Of course he shouldn't have thought Jimin would stay forever; that had been their deal after all. Jimin would stay for as long as it took him to get back on his feet, find somewhere else to live. And Jimin had stayed far longer than needed.

"I like it, too," Jungkook said with a not-so-hidden pout\, fidgeting with his car keys.

Jimin just laughed, hitting Jungkook's shoulder playfully as he turned to make his way into the kitchen/dining room area.

It was small, the apartment. But even Jungkook could feel it, feel how right it would be for Jimin to live here. He could see it, see Jimin hanging pictures all over the walls, buying his own furniture, washing his own dishes late at night after ordering more of that spicy chicken Jungkook hated. Could see Jimin being happy.

It was a nice, safe place.

"Jungkook-ah, look at this!"

Jungkook made his way into the kitchen, seeing Jimin standing in front of a big window, a fairly good view of downtown Seoul stretched out below them, bustling and full of life. And Jimin's smile was so bright and easy, his eyes so full of light and hope and determination.

Jimin was radiant.

Fuck.

Jungkook shifted from foot to foot as he took in the apartment, took it in piece by piece, letting it sink into his head. Barely noticed Jimin walking through the hallway into the single bathroom, opening a closet and peering in before closing it and moving on.

Jungkook followed when Jimin opened the bedroom door.

And he didn't notice, didn't notice Jimin was crying until he saw his shoulders shaking. Saw the happy tears on his face as he smiled and smiled.

Jungkook smiled, too. "You okay?"

Jimin nodded a little, wiping some of the tears from his cheeks with the back of his hand. “I’m just so happy, Jungkook-ah. I’m so happy.”

Jungkook cupped the side of Jimin’s hand in his palm, smoothing a thumb over his cheek, catching a few tears.

“I never thought… I never thought I’d…” Jimin shook his head, laughing a little as he looked up at Jungkook. “I thought I’d die before something like this would ever happen. I was… I don’t know. I just don’t think this could possibly be real.”

Jungkook held Jimin by his shoulders, then, just smiling. “You’re here, Jimin. This is real. You did this.”

Jimin shrugged sheepishly, a tiny blush stealing his cheeks. “You helped me get here.”

made it only two steps

Jungkook’s smile faltered for a fraction of a second, remembering the inky blotch still between them. It hurt more now that he knew Jimin trusted him wholly, now that things of the past were seemingly settled and forgiven. It was something that still haunted Jungkook at night, made him look at Jimin’s closed eyes as they fluttered with sleep, breath softly puffing into Jungkook’s shirt as he slept curled into the maknae.

Made him remember what he’d planned to do all those months ago in the midst of his desperation and hurt.

couldn’t leave Jimin, couldn’t

he ran; he fucking ran

It wasn’t fair to Jimin, wasn’t fair at all. The fact that the video even existed weighed heavily in Jungkook’s mind nowadays. He wouldn’t use it-- never. He’d decided rather adamantly that he couldn’t.

pinned against the wall, glass shattered at their feet

hands around Jimin’s throat

He would have to tell Jimin the truth eventually. Tell Jimin exactly what had happened that night. Because even though Jimin’s night terrors had ebbed away as the months had passed, even though his smile was brighter than ever, that video would be throwing all that hurt and torture and agony right back in Jimin’s face.

Minwo was going to kill him

but at least Jungkook had footage

“You helped me, too,” Jungkook muttered quickly. “You helped me, too.”

And then they were looking, looking at each other. Into each other’s eyes. And Jungkook briefly thought of the movie night so long ago, when they’d sat next to each other on the couch while Titanic played in the background. Remembered the smoothness of the light painted over his face, illuminating his eyes, full lips too inviting, always too inviting.

Jungkook swallowed hard as Jimin stepped in a little closer, fingertips brushing up Jimin’s waist.

Couldn’t help how his heart leapt into his throat, beating soft and hot and fast.

He’d tasted those lips, had dived into a depth he’d long since realized he’d never be able to escape. Was too in love, too far beneath the waves of reason. And these feelings, they were nearly three years in the making now. Three years of up and downs, of hurt and longing and forgiveness.

Three years.

God, it’d actually been almost three years now since that day they’d met in GCF’s lobby.

“What’s wrong?” Jimin murmured, voice low and quiet.

Jungkook shook his head a little. “Nothing. Nothing’s wrong.”

Three years, and now, now it might all come to an end. The heat in Jungkook’s chest dipped into icy cold waters at the thought, remembering Minwo’s last note. Wondered if this was Jimin’s way of running now, if they’d ever see each other again after Jimin moved out.

Was this the end for them?

No, no. He couldn’t think like that. This was a happy day for Jimin. Jimin was taking one step closer to independence, to freedom. Knew it wasn’t logical to think Jimin would miss him as much as he would miss Jimin. Wasn’t fair to think like that.

“This one?” Jungkook asked, taking a small step back from Jimin.

The unsure, worried expression on Jimin’s face shifted into that light, happy smile again. “This is the one.”

Jungkook nodded, ignoring how his heart twisted with something sour, trying to hold onto Jimin as much as he could. It would only be a few days now, a few days until Jimin would leave and never come back: completely free to live his own life and be his own person.

“We’d better hurry,” Jungkook said, trying to move past his thoughts before they consumed him. “You’re meeting Namjoon this morning. Tae’s probably already waiting for you.”

Jimin nodded, something sad and longing in his gaze. “Okay.”

It would be okay, Jungkook thought. He would learn to be okay with Jimin’s absence. He would learn to let go. First, his company and dignity and life. Then, the man he was in love with.

He’ll lie and lie and then he’ll run.

It would be okay.

White, mid-morning light bounced off the pavement beneath Jimin’s feet, the world beginning to warm as flowers perked up towards the rising sun. It was past the days of spring now, at the beginnings of summer, and June was probably Jimin’s favorite month of the year. It was a mixture of cool, dewy mornings and hot, bright afternoons, pastel sunsets and ice cold watermelons.

Jimin was walking with Taehyung towards the cafe that had become their favorite spot on days Jimin didn’t work a morning shift at Tony’s. And Taehyung, he was quiet, but not in a shy way. No, he was quiet in a contemplative way, uniquely himself in his thinking and words. Charming,

strange, wonderful.

Of course, Jimin wasn't just now discovering this. He'd sort of figured it out during the time he'd spent trying to heal through the people he lived with. He'd started clinging to Tae a lot, enjoying his unique quiet and how it was so simple, so pure. And so, as they were walking to meet Namjoon, Jimin found himself holding onto the other 95'er, clutching his arm in an attempt to steady his nerves.

Tae didn't say much. He had an earbud in, and Jimin had the other stuffed in his own ear. They were listening to some American band Jimin had never really heard of, but he liked it. It helped keep his mind off what was going to happen in the next few minutes.

Because Jimin was going to meet Namjoon.

Namjoon, who'd made *Mono.* Namjoon, who knew what it was to feel so lonely. Namjoon, who was Jimin's personal idol.

He was meeting Namjoon.

God, he was actually going to meet him.

After listening and listening for so long, filling his heart up with ponderous lyrics and soothing words, it was happening. And even though he'd told himself countless times since that UNO game weeks previous that everything would be fine, that Namjoon didn't even know who he was, he couldn't help but worry that the artist wouldn't like him.

"Jimin-ah, can I ask you something?" Tae murmured as they stopped to wait at a crosswalk.

Jimin smiled at the other 95'er, dipping his head in a small nod. "Of course."

Tae hesitated, pursing his lips, making his thinking face that had always made Jimin warm inside. And he hesitated for so long that by the time they'd crossed the street, nearing the cafe where they were supposed to meet Namjoon, Jimin stopped walking and pulled Tae to a stop as well.

"What did you need to ask me?"

Tae shrugged a little, scratching the back of his neck. "You and Jungkook-ah…"

Jimin's heart did a little flip, sputtering and fluttering and shooting adrenaline through his legs. "What about us?"

"You've been different around each other. Did something happen?"

Jimin looked up into Tae's worried eyes, saw the pure concern in them. The concern for his two best friends. And Jimin didn't blame Tae for question, not at all. It'd been a long time coming, ever since the kiss.

Because since then, things *had* been different.

They still slept in the same bed, still held each other and shared nightly glasses of water. But there was a tension now, a string pulled taught between them. Because they knew now, knew how the other felt. And it was terrifying, terrifying and exhilarating and dangerous.

Because when Jungkook closed his eyes to sleep, Jimin wanted to kiss his eyelids and run a hand through his hair, pull him close and shower him with love, love, love. Wanted to peck his lips over

and over and smile against his cheek, bury his face in the crook of Jungkook's neck and feel whole. Whole and good and safe.

But Jimin couldn't, couldn't because he needed more time.

His desperate mantra of self love had become a little easier to bear, just a little. Wasn't so hard to look in the mirror. Still had the bad days; hell, it'd be a miracle if Jimin never saw Minwo's eyes in his head again. But he was trying. God, was he trying.

Jimin looked back up at Tae, a small smile blooming across his lips as he reached up, patting the other 95'ers neck affectionately. "It's nothing bad, Taehyung-ah."

Tae kept Jimin's gaze for a moment longer before nodding slowly, licking his lips as he seemed to mull some new information over in his head. But before they could linger much longer, Jimin was already tugging on Tae's arm, pulling him forward.

"We're going to be late," Jimin laughed. "I can't be late for this."

Tae seemed to shove his worry away as a smile took over his own face, square and bright. They made their way to the front doors of the cafe, and Jimin felt so fucking good. Felt nerves poking at his stomach, bursting as Tae opened the large glass door, waving Jimin to go in first.

And as his eyes flitted around the room, they landed on who he knew must be Namjoon. Brown hair parted to the side, a round face and deep eyes that spoke of intelligence and wisdom and youth. Dimples. Deepset dots dipping his cheeks as his eyes scrunched with the smile. Face lit up when he saw Tae, confirming it must be RM.

There was someone sitting across from him, someone Jimin hadn't noticed was there with Namjoon until they were turning in their seat.

And Jimin froze in his tracks.

heart

heart stuttering

ice, ice shocking through his head

couldn't fucking think, think, think

Because when the man turned around, Jimin's world crashed to a sudden stop.

Black eyes, dark and glinting and ruthless.

Minwo.

No.

Minwo hadn't seen him yet, and Jimin wasn't about to let him. Before even Tae could react, Jimin was whipping away from the cafe door, back out onto the sidewalk, around the corner of the shop.

No.

No, no, no.

not yet, not yet

wasn't supposed to see Him ever again

not yet

"Jimin!"

Jimin shook his head, walking a little faster, memories gnawing at his bones, wrenching at his scalp.

Whore, whore, whore.

Something crashed against the hardwood floor, the sound nipping at Jimin's heels as he dashed around a corner.

Another thud, another crash. Broken glass, a curse, swearing. Jimin rounded another corner, shoulder slamming into drywall as he dashed up the spiral staircase.

Monster, monster chasing him down. Had to get away, get away fast. Nowhere to go, nowhere to run.

"Little whore!" Minwo was raging behind him, the hairs on the back of Jimin's neck raising with a cold sweat. "Get the fuck back here!"

Jimin cursed himself for wearing socks, feet slipping and sliding on the wood flooring as he tumbled through the door into the master bedroom. Twisted around and around, looking for an escape.

But he was trapped.

Wind knocked out of him as the massive form of his boyfriend barrelled into him from behind. Slammed him down into the floor, Jimin's head ringing with the clunk of his skull against the ground. Arms twisted at odd angles, alarms crying in his legs as Minwo's knees dug into his calves.

"Little bitch," Minwo spat, bruising grip crushing around Jimin's forearms.

"No," Jimin whined, pawing at Minwo's hands. "It hurts. Please, I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

"I never-" Minwo fisted Jimin's pink locks through his meaty fingers, tugging harshly. "-never said you could dye your hair pink. Little fucker, you look like a fucking whore."

Jimin gasped as Minwo wrestled Jimin to stand up, hair still gripped tightly in his hand. Jimin clawed, clawed at those hands, trying desperately to get away. Get away as Minwo dragged him to the bathroom. Shoved him against the sharp edge of the countertop, hip bones slamming into marble.

"Look at yourself," Minwo growled, jerking Jimin's head up to face himself in the mirror. "You think this is okay?"

Light pink hair, split lip, blood dribbling down his chin. Skeletal arms and baggy white T-shirt and tears burning his eyes. Winced, pain lacing through his scalp as Minwo shook him, fingernails digging into the sensitive skin of his head.

“You look like a whore.”

The first tear fell, splashing on his hands, bracing the counter to ease some of the pressure from his hips.

“Look at you, little fucking whore. Look at yourself.”

Jimin couldn’t see, couldn’t see through the tears burning hot and salty in his vision. “I like my hair.”

Jimin didn’t register it until his cheek connected with the creaking glass of the bathroom mirror, until he felt Minwo’s lips at his ear, whispering and hot. “You’re a whore. Say it.”

Jimin shook his head against the mirror, closing his eyes.

Minwo’s grip on his pink hair tightened to the point Jimin started squeaking with the pain. “Say it!”

Jimin felt the blood from his chin and lips smear against the cold, biting surface of the mirror as Minwo slammed his face into the mirror a few more times, screaming at him to say it.

“I’m a whore,” Jimin gasped out, words choked in his throat.

“Say it again,” Minwo snarled, pulling Jimin back enough that he could see himself in the mirror.

Saw himself through the blood, through the tears and snot smeared over his face, red smudging his cheeks and nose from being slammed against the mirror.

“I’m a whore.”

Minwo shoved himself against Jimin, the smaller man squealing as one of his fingers caught between his hip bone and the counter edge in an effort to save his pulsing hips from the brunt of the force.

“Again.”

Jimin’s lungs were full of ash, and this time when he looked at himself in the mirror, he started to believe it. Saw Jungkook’s eyes mirrored back at him from that night in the courthouse just the other week. “I’m a whore.”

Again and again, Minwo slammed Jimin’s face against the mirror. Did it until he was appeased with Jimin’s sobbing pleas of “I’m a whore, I’m a whore, I’m a whore.”

Left Jimin lying on the bathroom floor, clutching his swollen face, his finger broken, his hip bones bruised raw.

Left Jimin with one word.

Whore.

“You’re worth living, you’re worth loving,” Jimin chanted under his breath, trying to shove Minwo’s voice from his head. “Worth living, worth loving. Worth living, worth loving.”

He does not define you.

Jimin stopped running.

Heard the slap of Tae's shoes against cement as the other 95'er caught up to him.

He does not define you.

The terror at having seen Minwo, so overwhelming and strong, seemed to dim a little, then. Dim and simmer down into hot-burning coals. Coals of anger, of spite.

Hadn't seen Minwo in 4 months, not in person. Had only seen the man in his nightmares, in his daytime terrors. Saw Minwo when he looked at himself in the mirror, felt Minwo's nasty words raking down his back when he was walking to work. Hadn't seen him in so long, not since he'd run away.

But… Jimin was different now than he was then. He wasn't skinny and broken and ripped apart anymore. He was different. More defiant. Because why the hell should he let Minwo have that control over him?

Why should he let Minwo define this moment?

Why should he let Minwo define *him?*

Jimin had let Minwo trample him for long enough, and maybe it was Yoongi's words or Tae's presence or Jungkook's companionship. Maybe it was a fool's mind, a foolish feeling, a foolhardy soul he'd been born with. But he didn't care at all: he'd always been a fool.

Because he was turning around. Turning around. Turning around. And Tae was apologizing, spluttering about not knowing Minwo was going to be there, that they were leaving right then.

But Jimin just shook his head, small hands clenching into fists as he started walking back towards that cafe, towards the monster that'd made his life a living hell for years.

he

does

not

define

you

Jimin was going to face his demon.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading <3 thoughts? what you think? what you feel?

also, i posted a one shot called "we don't love anymore" based on charlie puth's song - we don't talk anymore. maybe check it out? i've had it written for about 3 months now and decided to post it on a whim... no impulse control, you know?
you can find me on tumblr @ idreaminmono
as always, thanks for the support

you're my tear

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood- Outro: Tear by BTS

Jimin surged forward, dead set on storming back into that cafe and raising hell. Goosebumps, shivers, chills swirling pricks across his skin in waves of cold nerves. Pair of black eyes, dark and frigid and empty slamming through him.

Purple, purple and magenta stinging Jimin's eyelids: the color of bruises. Bruises mapping his mind like an expanse of interconnected constellations, webbed out and dashed up, torn up, cut up. Glittering with pain, pain, pain.

Because bruises, they had always come after Minwo. And without any to see, his mind was conjuring them for him. Blooming them like bloodless petals in his head. Plastered over the walls in his mind.

Jimin was lost, fingers curling around empty air, empty space. Lost and clawing at something he was so close to discovering. Would perhaps think back on it later and grasp that realization, hold it close and pin it into his soul. But for now, he couldn't think too much about it. Was too busy batting away Taehyung's grasp, his panicked words.

"Jimin-ah, stop," Tae pleaded. "You can't go back there."

"Don't try to stop me, Tae."

"What are you doing?"

"What does it look like I'm doing?"

"Jimin-ah-"

"No, I've run for long enough," Jimin spat, a sudden coal of self-loathing shivering beneath his skin, breaking through, splitting open.

Light pink hair, split lip, blood dribbling down his chin.

"Stop, Jimin. Stop and think for a minute!"

"I already did!" Jimin snapped, shrugging off Tae's grip on his arm again and again. "I need to go back there."

Skeletal arms and baggy white T-shirt and tears burning his eyes.

"No, you don't! It's not safe!"

Jimin's small hands clenched into fists, shaking his head. "Nothing's safe. Nothing is ever fucking safe."

Winced, pain lacing through his scalp as Minwo shook him, fingernails digging into the sensitive skin of his head.

Tae grabbed Jimin's arm more firmly this time, muscling him into a small space between stores a block away from the cafe. Boxed him in, thick frame too solid for Jimin to budge. Struggled anyways, refusing to think about anything but the demon lodged inside his head. Presence still clinging to him like a shivering breath of nightless air.

You look like a whore.

Say it.

"Let me go, Tae," Jimin snapped, shoving at the other 95'ers chest. "Just let me go!"

"I can't. I won't let you get hurt."

"I don't care, I don't care."

"I care."

Jimin sucked in a harsh breath, bruises upon bruises like stained glass smeared through his vision. Head spinning, arms shaking, ribs gonna snap. "Let me go."

"No."

"Please," Jimin breathed. "Please let me go back."

"Why?"

"Please."

"Not like this. You need to do it the right way. With a legal team and him standing trial. You can't do this now."

Jimin shook his head, tumbling through himself, wondering why this felt so familiar. Thought it was because he'd been in this exact position months ago, only it was Jungkook instead of Taehyung. And Jimin had been running away back then, was trying to go back now.

"I need to go back."

"Tell me why, Jimin-ah. Why do you need to go back right now?"

Saw himself through the blood, through the tears and snot smeared over his face, red smudging his cheeks and nose from being slammed against the mirror.

I'm a whore.

"He hurt me so much, Tae. He hurt me," Jimin choked out, hating too many things. Hating Minwo, hating himself. "He hurt me so much, and I want him to hurt, too."

Something in Tae's eyes was stricken, turned dark. Eyes flitted over Jimin's, brow furrowed, hands bracing Jimin's soft shoulders. "What are you going to do? What happens when you go back in there?"

The truth? Jimin didn't really care what happened. Let Minwo finally kill him, beat him down, break him apart. He'd let the man do just that for long enough, but this time Jimin was going to fight back. Stitch the bruises in his vision to the demon that'd become his waking shadow. Turn that obsidian gaze into a sharpened blade.

But Tae must've seen that recklessness in Jimin's gaze; must've seen it, or he probably would've let Jimin go.

"Jimin, this is what he wants you to do. He wants you to go back to him, one way or another."

Jimin shook his head, unable to look into Tae's eyes anymore. Blue sky, red brick, bright sun. Cool, strawberry-sweetened air nipping his nose as he sucked in breath after breath, trying to clear his lungs of the poison trapped inside of him.

He'd spent so long focused on surviving. Survive, he'd told himself. Survive and you can learn to live on another day. Survive for now; doesn't matter what you become as long as you make it, as long as you're still breathing. Doesn't matter, doesn't matter if living and dying blur together, if survival is the only word you know besides pain.

Doesn't matter if you rot away, soul turned to aged wood, made of splinters and mold. Doesn't matter, as long as He still loves you, because who else will? Doesn't matter doesn't matter doesn't matter

Until it did.

And now, now he was awake. He wasn't half-asleep, dazed out, pulled under. He was awake, and he'd thought for a moment that he might as well burn himself up, light the match beneath the wood. Fill himself with smoke and snuff himself out.

But now that he was awake, now that Taehyung was staring down at him, panicked and worried…

"I won't force you…" Tae hummed quietly to himself, obviously unsure of how to place his words. "I won't force you to stay away from him. But it would hurt *me* to see you go back. It would hurt Jungkook."

Jimin didn't realize he had tears streaming down his face until his lips tasted of them. "That's not fair. That's selfish."

"I know." Tae nodded, pursing his lips in that unique way of his.

Jimin fought back the whimper of defeat in his throat, frustrated by how he was so easily crushed down. So easily swayed, won over. Head dipped forward, thunking against Tae's chest as he stole calming breaths, tears soaking into the warmth of the other 95'ers T-shirt. "He hurt me."

"I know," Tae murmured, fingertips brushing over Jimin's shoulder blades as he pulled him from the wall into his arms, hugging Jimin tight. "I know."

"I hate him," Jimin whispered weakly, lip trembling. Tired, so tired. Needed Jungkook. "I hate him."

Tae patted Jimin's back, smoothing his palms up and down, up and down.

"He hurt me."

Tae pulled back enough to meet Jimin's gaze. And Jimin, Jimin couldn't stop thinking about how this was different than last time. Different than that moment behind the ice cream parlor, all broken down, smashed into sharp, jagged bits.

Jimin wasn't broken anymore.

He was made of sea glass, broken bits smoothed over by lapping waves of the ocean. Remade and sanded down, if not a little rough still. Wasn't sharp anymore, wasn't freshly fractured. Made of matte off-whites and pearlescent greens and starry dreams. Filled with hope and something like love and all the other good things.

"You'll fly one day, Jimin-ah. But right now, you need to learn to use your wings."

Jimin normally would've cringed and punched Tae's shoulder at something so cheesy, but he was too exhausted to do so. Legs made of lead, bruises slowly fading from his vision, arms not shaking anymore. Just… just tired.

"What if I never fly? What if I drown?"

Tae shook his head, finally letting go of Jimin, stepping back a little. "Right now, that's up to you."

Jimin's words died in his throat, lungs hot and scratchy, filled with old air. Couldn't remember how to breathe for a moment, the imprint of a caged bird flickering behind his eyelids- a drawing Jungkook had actually done not too long ago.

Caged bird, golden bars, dulled feathers.

Flashes of that very same bird bombarded him, zipping like projector slides through his head. Film flickering and spotted, that bird having been buried long ago.

His eyes snapped up to meet Tae's, something bigger than himself flowing through his veins. Needed to do something; didn't know what, though. Didn't know what he could do or should do or might do.

Jimin wiped the tears of frustration from his burning eyes. Sighed, sinking down against the brick wall, head tipped back. Looked up at Tae, who was looking down at him, studying him. Suddenly sat down right next to Jimin, elbows resting on his knees, arms dangling between his legs.

And they were silent for a while, just sitting there between buildings, warm June afternoon wrapping them up in nothings of green trees and empty sidewalks. Sat there and listened to the birds flitting above them, lazy clouds drifting across the blue, blue sky.

"I'm sorry I stopped you," Tae offered, staring at his hands.

Jimin just shrugged.

"I understand," Tae licked his lips nervously, fiddling with a ring on his thumb. "Wanting to make someone hurt for hurting you."

Jimin turned his head, looking at his friend.

"I killed my dad when I was 17."

Jimin didn't know what to say to that, eyes widened, watching the young man next to him twist and twist that ring, around and around.

"What a random thing to say, right?" Tae said with a small, strained smile.

Jimin just stared, not knowing what to even begin to say to that, mouth dropped open a little in shock.

"Namjoon-hyung says I'm too random sometimes." Tae sheepishly scratched the back of his neck,

something soft and accepting wrapped around him. “But I just thought… I just thought I’d let you know that I understand.”

With that, Tae sank back against the brick behind him, seemingly content with what he’d said.

Jimin shook his head, mind trying to catch up with his sputtering tongue. “You can’t just say you killed someone and not… you can’t say something like that and not explain, Tae.”

Tae’s brows rose a little in question, and Jimin could see him going back through his words to see where he needed to fill in the gaps.

“Ah,” Tae said with a nod, still twisting that ring on his thumb. “I guess I really shouldn’t leave something like that open ended.”

Jimin blinked.

“I killed him with a beer bottle. His beer bottle. Because he was beating my sister.”

“And?”

Tae shrugged, as if the details really didn’t matter. “Legal stuff happened. Nothing much besides that.”

Kim Taehyung was a man of few words, and Jimin found himself increasingly perplexed by how his beautiful mind worked.

And Jimin tried, tried to imagine Tae doing something like that. Hands soaked with blood, face twisted with agony, forehead pressed to a wall as he shook with the realization of what he’d done. Younger and smaller and hurting.

Jimin knew all too well what having a father like that was. Had thought about killing the man who was supposed to have raised him too many times, huddled in a pile of moth-bitten blankets in a chilly basement, blood dripping down his face as his brother curled up next to him. Had been filled to the brim with hatred long before he’d ever tasted love.

Jimin didn’t say this, though. Didn’t tell the young man next to him that they had a lot more in common than he’d ever thought. But he was glad for Taehyung’s words, for sharing that piece of his history with him.

It grounded Jimin, made him think about how stupid it would’ve been to charge back into that cafe.

Jimin had a lot more to lose now. He’d just applied for his first apartment on his own. Had friends that genuinely enjoyed having him around. Was working on winning his life back. Winning himself back.

And then there was Jungkook.

Jungkook, with his persistence. His constant faith in Jimin, his forgiveness. Jimin had more than fucked Jungkook over, and yet the maknae had somehow found it in himself to help him those months ago, stranded and freezing in a storm.

Jungkook, with his heart of gold. Gold rain, gold touch, gold soul. Everything too good in him, too pure.

Jimin still remembered all the shit he'd put the young man through, still remembered every ugly word and grey action and spat accusation. But nowadays, Jimin also remembered Jungkook's forgiveness.

Did Jimin deserve it? Not at all. Never would Jimin understand why Jungkook had chosen to forgive him. Jimin himself wouldn't even look back if someone had done that to him. But Jungkook had, and Jimin… Jimin loved him.

Eyes widened as he realized this, admitting it in his head. Realized he really loved him. Love thrashing through him like a wave, and Jimin hadn't felt this in a long time. Had felt love for friends and family, but never a love like this.

Because Jimin had loved Minwo, he had. But that love had been broken roots and twisted shingles, spiralling wells and sharp, naive claws. And this, this feeling, this love… it was like cherry blossoms and periwinkle skies, dandelion laughs and smiles made of yellow sapphire.

Jimin loved Jungkook.

That was a lot to lose.

But where Jimin had only a shaky, newly built foundation to lose, Jungkook had his entire world about to collapse. Was gonna lose everything. His life, his freedom, his hyungs. He would lose and lose and lose, and Minwo would get away with everything.

You need to do it the right way.

Jimin sucked in a harsh breath, gaze snapping up to a bird perched high above him on the building's roof. Watched it, waiting for it to fly.

But it didn't.

And Jimin was left with something that rattled him to his very core.

Mood: Fools (Cover by JK feat. RM)

Jungkook's phone was ringing.

It took him a second to really hear it, having been too busy staring at the email that'd come through on his computer.

… new court date set… legal team talking… worried about the outcome… new evidence…

Ringing.

His phone was ringing.

Call from… call from Tae?

He flipped his phone over, muting it. Went back to staring at that damn email, words flying behind his eyes at a dizzying pace.

Didn't see Tae trying to call four more times.

Zoned out, eyes tracing those damning words over and over again. Panic seizing up through his spine, swinging like a scythe. On the edge, edge of nerves. Ready to fall.

Didn't know how long he sat there, legs locked, arms gripping his desk as he remembered, remembered what going back to court meant.

Didn't want to go back to brutal words and sharp tongues and battering sentences. Didn't want to go back to shadows being painted over his hands, one knuckle at a time, the lick of a paintbrush like blood dripping from Jisoo's skull.

It would be the first court session he'd had since it'd been delayed six months ago. Since the judge and jury had decided to postpone it because of the excessive press coverage.

And in the back of his mind, he knew it was coming. Knew the pause couldn't have lasted forever. Jisoo's case needed justice, needed an end. It was just that Jungkook knew that end would be him behind bars for the rest of his life.

He didn't realize someone had come in his room until the door clicked shut. Heard the soft padding of feet over the rug as the person came up behind him. And jungkook knew who it was just by the footsteps; didn't have the energy to turn around.

Arms slipped over his shoulders from behind, hugging him around his chair. Saw a fuzz of blonde in his peripherals, Jimin's chin resting on his shoulder, a small, concerned hum tickling the shell of Jungkook's ear.

"What happened?"

Jungkook melted a little in Jimin's embrace, leaning his head to touch Jimin's, hands finally releasing their bloodless grip on the desk and gently cupping Jimin's arms where they encircled him.

"I'm going back to court."

Jimin's arms tightened a little, tensing, and Jungkook was grateful for the added pressure. Like Jimin was holding him close to keep him from falling apart right there.

"Are you okay?" Jimin's voice was smooth and soft and low in his ear, something that always eased Jungkook's heart just a little.

"No," he replied honestly, because he wasn't. "I'm terrified."

Jimin was quiet for a moment, just hugging Jungkook from behind. And Jungkook waited, waited for whatever words Jimin would offer. So Jungkook was surprised when Jimin didn't end up saying anything at all, instead letting go, tugging on his arm to stand up.

Blood rushed back to Jungkook's legs as he did so, not having realized they'd gone a little numb from sitting so tensely for so long. Turned to Jimin, watching him wearily as the smaller young man entwined their hands, pulling the maknae so that they faced each other.

Jungkook's gaze flickered over Jimin's face, from the blonde hair falling softly over his brow to his cute little nose and pretty pink lips. Cool, coffee eyes with a hint of blossoming hazel, peering up at him beneath dark lashes. Something different in his gaze, something changed.

"I'll be here for you," Jimin murmured with a reassuring smile. Hands tightened around Jungkook's, an orange slant of late afternoon light bleeding through the closed blinds, touching

their fingertips, warm and bright between them.

Couldn't resist, other hand reaching up and taking Jimin's in both of his. Smoothed his thumb over Jimin's fingers, playing with them, admiring them. Spotted the matching freckle on the side of his hand leading up to his short pinky. Played with Jimin's fingers, so pretty in the warm afternoon light, loving how small Jimin's hands were in his.

Gaze drifted down to Jimin's wrist, to the tiny scars encircling the fine skin there, all the way around. Thought back to the handcuffs still safely hidden in the very back of his dresser drawer. Remembered the speckles of blood, how Jimin had held them with a reverent terror.

"Jungkook-ah?"

Jungkook's eyes snapped up. Heart beating in his throat, hard to swallow. Too many things going through his head, too many.

"What can I do to help?" Jimin asked earnestly, the specks of hazel in his eyes like a grated pearl, all torn up and glittering.

Tell the world who Minwo really is. Tell them what he put you through, what monster lurks beneath his skin.

Speak.

"I don't know," Jungkook muttered, cupping Jimin's hands between his own. Didn't want to think about the fact that Jimin would be leaving soon. That moments like these would never happen again.

There was a flash of that something different in Jimin's eyes again, and Jungkook caught himself before his brow furrowed, before he asked what had happened. Because it really was there, that change. Something a little bold and a lot terrified. And if Jungkook didn't know better, it reminded him of that night in the courthouse so long ago. The flicker of decision, of something taking permanence in Jimin's head.

The look was gone before Jungkook could ask, though. Gone, and Jimin was speaking.

"Jungkook?"

Jungkook couldn't help the heat spreading through his chest, face warming as he realized just how close they were standing. Heart beat, beat, beat. Stuttered out a nervous poem of heartprints, pressing unspoken words into his pulse, stringing lines through his blood.

And maybe it was how pretty Jimin looked, bathed in orange light, blonde hair shifting between swathes of melon and persimmon, lips shiny and smooth and pink. Maybe it was how in love Jungkook was, their lives far too entwined at this point to deny. Maybe it was something beyond love and hate, something more dangerous.

Jungkook cupped Jimin's face between his hands. Gentle, so gentle. Gave Jimin a chance to pull away.

Jimin didn't.

"I know," Jungkook whispered, voice low in his throat. "I know you said… it was too soon… but can I…?"

Eyes heavy-lidded, trained on Jungkook's lips. Something warmer, more stifling coating the air. Slower and shakier, not as sure as he'd been last time, no longer shrouded by darkness and late hours of the night. This was bright and open and honest, and when Jungkook's lips softly connected with Jimin's, everything in his head was made of what-ifs and in-betweens.

Brought Jimin closer, fingertips curling at the lines of his jaw. Kissed soft and slow and gentle, lips meeting quietly, a treasure just for them. Something sacred, something spiritual. Lilacs and magentas swirling through Jungkook's head as they kissed.

Lose, Jungkook was going to lose him. Shouldn't hold on too tight, not when Jimin needed to be free. Was scared of becoming a monster for thinking like that. But he'd wanted Jimin for too long, even when he'd hated him. Heart had never really stopped clinging to the beautiful boy with the stunning smile.

And then a thought hit him. Made him realize how fleeting time was when he was so close to a prison cell. When he would be caged up for the rest of his life.

Realized he may never have these opportunities again. Never hold Jimin, never see his cute, puffy face in the early, muted lights of morning. Never feel a fry poking at his lip to wake him up, a poorly-muffled giggle following close behind. Never wander the bank of the Han River in the depths of night, city lights washed behind them, stars glittering ahead, every drop of light offered from the world around them like a diamond in Jimin's eyes.

And he knew Jimin had to feel something, too. Because Jimin was kissing him back with the same heat, same energy. Was kissing Jungkook like he was something delicate and beautiful and darling.

It was more than simply being in love.

Jungkook couldn't help himself. Eyes fluttered open, pulling back, searching Jimin's gaze.

Red-kissed lips and dilated pupils and flush staining the soft lines of his face. Jungkook's hands broke away from Jimin's hips for a second, hovering, terrified. Thought about that morning, standing in what was sure to be Jimin's new apartment, staring into each other's eyes.

Something had changed since then, something prodding with warning in the back of Jungkook's head. But he shoved it down, chest rising and falling with heavy, filling breaths.

And then they were kissing again. Sharp and searing and parched, so parched. Needed Jimin, needed to taste him, touch him, hold him. Hands, hands back on Jimin's hips, fingers splayed wide, pulling him closer. Jimin's hands usually so careful, so hesitant, were slipping beneath Jungkook's shirt, cool fingertips on hot skin making Jungkook gasp a little, abdominals clenching up.

Tongue soft and hot and wet, poking between Jungkook's lips. Opened for him, moaning softly at the taste of Jimin's mouth. The shiver of heat it webbed through his body. The way he felt so completely enveloped by everything Jimin did, every feathery breath between kisses shocking right through his body.

Heard Jimin's voice from the night they'd shared their first kiss, telling him it was too soon. And Jungkook still believed it. Still thought this might be too soon, too reckless. Knew Yoongi was right; should've stayed away. But there was something selfish in Jungkook's head, too. Something that wanted to love Jimin completely, no longer in the awkward inbetweens and could've-beens.

Both of Jimin's hands were beneath Jungkook's shirt, blunt nails dragging along the sensitive skin of his sides. And Jungkook, Jungkook was backing Jimin up against the bed. Felt when the backs

of Jimin’s knees touched the mattress, Jimin tensing for just a moment before giving in and falling back, pulling Jungkook down with him.

Jungkook’s mouth slipped from Jimin’s, kissing over his chin, down beneath his jaw. Laved his tongue over the soft skin there, Jimin’s fingers cupping the back of Jungkook’s head, guiding him to a spot just below the curve of his jaw.

Pressed Jimin into the yellow blanket beneath them, Jimin so warm and solid beneath him, palms sliding up Jimin’s sides. Jungkook nipped at Jimin’s ear, lips brushing across piercings. And then Jimin tugged his head over, lips meeting again, soft and slow and sweet.

They didn’t hear the door swing open.

“Shit.”

Heads snapped apart, everything frozen and trembling with shock.

Yoongi and Hoseok.

Chapter End Notes

so uh... long time no see? hope you liked this chapter... i'm so sorry if it's disappointing haha i'm in a really bad writing slump... depression hitting hard, ya know? but usually that's when my writing is at it's best for some reason... just not this time. and it's really frustrating me i guess.
it's also kinda 3 am, so i'm sorry for any spelling errors...
i guess i'm just sorry idk
if you want to follow me, my tumblr is "idreaminmono"
(i've also been really curious... but it would be really nice if you guys would share your favorite line/moment/anything that touched you in the whole story... if anything did... that would really make my day? idk i feel a little pathetic rn tbh...)

hope, my hope

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Flares by The Script

“Shit.”

Jimin’s head snapped back into the mattress, whipping to the source of the curse. Jungkook’s body was heavy on top of his, arms braced at his sides, hair mussed and lips swollen with kisses. And Jimin knew he probably looked the exact same, no way to hide what they’d just been doing.

And it was strange, really, how the smallest things come back at the worst times. Because what if Jungkook didn’t want anyone to know? What if this ruined what they had, what had barely begun to blossom between them? What if Jimin had ruined, ruined, ruined something that was supposed to be a secret?

Jimin had always been a secret.

Secret bruises, secret fights. Secret whispers and kisses and nights. Always hidden, always. And so his breath was gone, lungs empty as the blur that had been Yoongi and Hoseok disappeared with the shutting of the door, voices pitched back and forth as footsteps scampered back down the hall.

Secret

Secret

Secret

Jimin shouldn’t have gone straight to Jungkook as soon as he’d gotten home. Because of course Tae would’ve told Hoseok what had happened. Tae had barely been able to let Jimin go as they’d walked home, something quiet and settled between them.

Jimin should’ve waited. Should’ve talked, should’ve cleared things up before they came looking for him. But he hadn’t, had immediately sought out the one person that could comfort him, make him feel good again after hurting so much. Had gone straight up to Jungkook’s room, finding him paralyzed in his chair, computer screen long timed out.

“I’m sorry,” Jimin blurted before he could think to stop himself. Scrambled to push himself up, Jungkook flailing to avoid their heads knocking together. “I’m so sorry. Fuck, they saw, they saw-“

Head spinning, eyes flitting, flying around the room, looking for anything, anything that might save him from what Jungkook was about to say. Didn’t want to, didn’t want to lose him, not when he had just realized-

Jungkook was shaking.

And oh god, he must be really angry. Really, really angry. Must’ve already had such a bad day finding out he was going back to court, and now this. Caught kissing someone he should stay away from. Caught with a *whore-*

“ Jungkook, I’m so sorry. I should’ve talked to them first, but I didn’t. I didn’t and they saw-“

Jimin finally glanced up at Jungkook, shoulders shaking so hard he could barely hold himself up, flopped over onto the mattress right next to him.

Laughing.

Jungkook was laughing so hard he was turning red, curled in on himself, desperately clutching his stomach as if it hurt. Eyes shut tight, struggling to rasp in oxygen.

Jungkook wasn't Minwo.

Jimin's panic vanished. And while Jungkook struggled to breathe, Jimin was left with nothing but shame.

There was absolutely no comparison between the two of them, and yet Jimin's mind had weighed their similarities and differences all the same. Shame, a hot coal on his tongue, lips sewed shut as it burned his mouth all the way down to his stomach, everything blistering and bursting and hot.

Jimin couldn't force himself to fake a smile as he watched Jungkook laugh, all high pitched and squeaky. Nose scrunched up cute like a little bunny, pearly white teeth on full display. Always so handsome, so full of life and love and something entirely pure.

And Jimin, Jimin had thought- he'd thought-

"At least it wasn't Jin-hyung," Jungkook choked out, breathing in sweet breaths of precious oxygen between giggles. "Did you see their faces?"

Jimin didn't say anything, nothing at all, shame still burning him up inside.

"They looked like they'd never seen somebody kiss, even though I caught them making out just the other day."

Jimin's mind was still spinning, still running rampant. Black eyes from that morning coming back to haunt him, so sharp and cold and cruel, staring back at him through a mirror streaked with blood.

Jungkook didn't seem worried at all, didn't sound like he thought his life might end because he'd been caught kissing someone like Jimin.

"Jimin?"

Jimin's gaze snapped down to Jungkook, the maknae propping himself up on an elbow, shirt lifting the tiniest bit with the movement, revealing a strip of toned, smooth, tan stomach.

Jimin hated himself.

"What's wrong?" Jungkook asked, leaning forward, hand coming up to cup the side of Jimin's face.

Jimin flinched at the touch, unable to look Jungkook in the eye, guilt tearing, tearing, tearing him up. Couldn't think about anything but those fucking black eyes in his head, always watching, always waiting.

"I'm sorry," Jungkook suddenly whispered.

Jimin's eyes snapped to meet Jungkook's, seeing something soft and sad and worried in the maknae's gaze. "Why are you sorry?" Jimin asked, thinking it was strange since he was the one

who should be apologizing.

Jungkook sat up all the way, lower lip caught between his teeth, hand falling away from Jimin's face. Started fidgeting with a corner of the yellow blanket beneath them. Blush, cute little blush spreading over the bridge of his nose, the apples of his cheeks. And Jimin had to stop himself, stop himself from reaching up and running a hand through Jungkook's black hair, a little lock sticking up in his bangs.

"You said you weren't ready," Jungkook muttered, voice too small, too quiet. "But I, um… I kissed you anyways. And now you're upset."

Jimin was already shaking his head, heart pounding, pounding, pounding in his skull. Blood rushing and roaring in his ears, too loud. "That's not… that's not why I'm upset."

Jungkook was staring down at his hands, fingers twisting and turning and scrunching the blanket. "It's not?" And whatever Jungkook was thinking now, it must be worse than what he'd thought before: frown deepening, eyes too vulnerable as he ducked his head.

Jimin nervously licked his lips, knowing, knowing he had to tell Jungkook the truth. Tell him exactly what had gone through his head the moment Yoongi and Hoseok had opened that door. Didn't want Jungkook thinking it was something else.

"Jungkook-ah," Jimin whispered, a little terrified. "I'm not upset because you kissed me."

Jungkook's shoulders tensed a little, back to biting his lip, bright yellow such a pretty color in his hands. "No?"

Jimin shook his head, hugging his legs to his chest, trying to stop the tremble in his hands by clutching onto his arms. "I like it when you kiss me."

Jungkook perked up at this, head finally tilting back up, no longer hiding beneath his bangs. "You do?"

And there was something so endearing about Jungkook, something that always eased Jimin's heart just that much more. And he'd thought it a million times, but Jungkook was golden rain, really was. Pearlescent soul and silvery laughter and ruby heartprints, all weaved together to make something invaluable. Something rare and strong and priceless.

"I do," Jimin affirmed with a little nod to himself, hugging his legs so tightly his arms started going numb. Cringed so hard inside he had to turn his head away, not wanting Jungkook to see the hint of a grimace on his lips. "I… I have something to tell you."

Jimin supposed Jungkook's silence meant he should continue.

"I saw Minwo this morning."

Another beat of silence before something sharp stung the air between them, Jungkook hands freezing in that yellow blanket, going completely still. "I thought you were going to see Namjoon-hyung. Why would you..."

Jimin shook his head. "He was with Namjoon in the cafe. He didn't see me. I ran away. But I only got about a block away before I decided to turn around and go back."

A nervous hand on his shoulder, and Jimin finally looked up. Looked up, watching as something between panic and worry flashed through Jungkook's eyes, fingers pressing just a little harder into

Jimin's shoulder. Not enough to hurt, or even hint at hurting. Not possessive or jealous or angry, just worried. "Are you okay? Did he hurt you?" Eyes flitting over Jimin's face, his neck, the exposed skin of his wrists where his sleeves had rolled up a little. Bruises, looking for bruises.

"Tae stopped me."

Jungkook's face drained of color, going sheet-white. "He tried to call me. He tried to call me like a dozen times."

Jimin nodded. "I wanted to talk to you. I guess I was… I was a little…" Jimin didn't finish the sentence, but by the look on Jungkook's face, he didn't think he even needed to.

"When they caught us kissing just now, I thought… I thought you would be mad. I thought it would ruin whatever this is that we have."

Confusion, pure bewilderment settling over Jungkook's face.

Jimin ducked his head, the shame from earlier breaking through to the surface. "He kept me hidden for 2 years. Always told me that I'd ruin everything if we were ever caught. And I guess… I guess I thought for a moment you would want that, too."

Jungkook's mouth was already opening, denial lacing through the defiant glow in his eyes.

"I know," Jimin cut Jungkook off, guilt, guilt, guilt choking him up. "I know it's wrong to think like that. You're not him. You're not him at all."

Jungkook's defensive gaze softened, evening out immediately.

"I'm sorry," Jimin whispered. "Seeing him this morning, and then them walking in on us… I'm sorry."

"You don't need to apologize for something like that," Jungkook murmured.

Jimin nodded a little, a sudden weight of exhaustion pressing down on him, stomping on his shoulders. Was tired, too tired. Tired of the back and forth between okay and not okay, never knowing when he'd be hit the hardest.

Jimin didn't know how to describe what happened next. Eyes widened, heart running hot in his veins as Jungkook sort of gently pushed him back into the mattress. Jimin's arms fell apart from around his legs, hands planting into the yellow blanket as Jungkook looped an arm over him, pulling him close. And Jimin hated how he was always so surprised by Jungkook and his kind heart, how he was always so affectionate, so warm, if not deathly shy at first.

"Why do you always do that?" Jimin asked, finally giving in to the urge to reach up and card his fingers through Jungkook's hair, smoothing it down.

"Do what?" Jungkook asked, and Jimin's eyes travelled to that mole right below his bottom lip.

"Why do you always forgive me?"

Minwo wouldn't have. Minwo would've beat me to the ground, words and fists.

Jungkook was not Minwo.

Not even close.

Jungkook's eyes were flitting over Jimin's face, from the soft blonde bangs hanging over his brow to his nose to his lips. And his gaze, it was too genuine, too real, too raw. Jimin had always run from eyes like those, eyes that looked too deep and spoke too much.

"You taught me," Jungkook spoke softly, his eyes filled, filled to the brim with memories of pain and hurt and loss. "You taught me what forgiveness is. What it *really* is."

Jimin's brow twitched upwards in question, face already warming with rose and tourmaline.

"It's not about forgetting what's happened. It's about remembering that pain and accepting that it hurt you, but discovering that you can heal it, too." Jungkook shifted a little closer to Jimin, almost nose to nose, black and yellow-blonde hair mixing on the pillow. "Before, I didn't want to think. I wanted to forget, so I let it burn me up inside."

Jimin knew that feeling all too well, had known it his whole life.

"I let everything burn me up, and it hurt me. It was so dark inside my head I don't… I don't know what I would've done if you hadn't come to me that night, if you hadn't made me face myself. And after everything… everything we've been through, now that I have a new court date coming up…" There was something fractured, something desperate and real and yearning in his gaze, and Jimin closed his eyes, pressing forward and touching the tip of his nose to Jungkook's, nuzzling them together.

"I don't want to go to prison filled with regrets."

Words, those words were something sharp between Jimin's ribs. Sharp as cut glass, laid glittering and jagged on the asphalt. Didn't want to think about the decision he'd made earlier that day, sitting next to Taehyung, a block away from his monster. Didn't want to think about how his mind was one thread away from shredding itself up at the thought of what he had to do. How everything in his very nature was telling him to run away, run away and hide.

Nobody will believe you, little whore. It's your word against his, and who are you?

And then Jungkook leaned in. Lips, lips soft and warm and just the right amount of chapped, giving them some friction. Lips against Jimin's, so soulbreakingly sweet. Made just for him. Made for those ear-to-ear smiles and glittering laughs and perfect words. Kissed, just kissed, something light and fluttery in Jimin's stomach.

Their lips broke away with a soft sound before coming back, Jimin meeting him this time. The arm Jungkook had looped over his waist pulled him close, palm warm and secure on the dip of Jimin's lower back, and Jimin nearly cried with how content he felt, how safe.

I love you.

Threaded his fingers through Jungkook's hair, pulling him close, pulling him in. Kissed him with everything he had, every drop of love he could offer. Kissed the young man that had put him back together, helped him begin healing, given him so much newfound strength.

They kissed for a while.

Jimin didn't run away this time.

Mood: If You (Cover) by Jungkook

It was too dark in the kitchen, the oven light turned off for once. Everything from the couch where Jimin used to sleep to the kitchen table covered in paint speckled newspapers was faded with night blues, everyone upstairs and sleeping. Quiet, so quiet.

Jungkook walked softly on the pads of his feet, going up to the cupboards by the fridge, opening one up and grabbing two cups. Jimin was already fast asleep, but Jungkook would get him a glass of water anyways in case he woke up during the night.

While Jimin's night terrors had definitely tapered off a lot, he still had them every now and then. Jungkook had found that having a glass of water for Jimin to drink when he woke calmed him a little bit more, just a little. So Jungkook always got Jimin one, just in case.

"When were you going to tell me?"

Jungkook nearly dropped the glass in his hand, shoulders tensing as he slowly turned off the tap, turning around. "Hyung."

Sleek black bangs and feline eyes, skin made of moonsilk- fair and smooth. Hands shoved in his pockets, hoodie strings uneven across his chest. And Yoongi was just looking at him. Really looking. And Jungkook shrunk a little under that scrutiny, his hyung's gaze too piercing, too aware. Always such a force to be reckoned with.

"When were you going to tell me about you and Jimin?"

Nerves prickled along Jungkook's back, his neck turning cold with sweat, gut churning with anticipation as his heart squeezed with something queasy, uncomfortable. "When were you going to tell me about you and Hoseok-hyung?" He countered.

Yoongi just shrugged, hands moving in his pockets, as if they were balling up into weak fists. "You've got me there," Yoongi cocked his head to the side, bangs slanted across his brow as he peered at Jungkook some more. "But you're not getting out of it that easy."

Jungkook sighed, looking down at the glasses of water he held in his hands. Toed at the floor beneath his feet, biting his lip as his heart beat, beat, beat in his chest. "I don't… I don't know what to say."

Yoongi looked Jungkook up and down before a small smile tugged at his lips, surprising the maknae. Made his eyes widen as Yoongi's smile turned into a big, gummy grin. Laughed his silent, huffing laugh as he shook his head. "You don't have to act so guilty about it."

Jungkook just blinked, watching his hyung intensely. Had thought Yoongi would've been mad at him, still remembered his warnings to stay away.

"Jungkook-ah? What's wrong?"

Jungkook sighed, brushing his bangs out of his eyes. "I thought… I thought you'd be mad."

Yoongi's brow rose, still amused. "Mad?"

"You told me to stay away," Jungkook reminded him.

Yoongi nodded, shrugging easily. “I told you to stay away until you were both in a better place.”

Jungkook glanced down at the glasses of water in his hands, watching the sway of dim moonlight bleeding through the blinds being reflected, distorted, concentrated across his fingers, his knuckles. “So you’re really not mad?”

Yoongi’s smile faded a little, replaced with something like a nostalgic ache. Something filled with memories both sweet and bitter. But it was something mostly sunny, mostly good. Heavy with something that wasn’t entirely crushing, but not light either. “No. I’m not.”

Jungkook nodded a little, still not knowing what to say to his hyung. Because after the kisses had eased between he and Jimin, it hadn't been long before Jimin had fallen asleep, leaving Jungkook awake to think. Think and think and think, mind always too busy.

Thought about the past and the future, both tainted and drowned in uncertainty, doused with pain and lit with chains. Couldn’t help himself; gunmetal grey followed him like second shadow, pinned to his shoulders like a threat. Couldn’t stop thinking.

Couldn’t stop thinking about Jimin. Jimin, who had become a cup of warm light, easily cradled between his palms. Jimin, who he’d hated so much and so little at the same time. His catalyst, his world, always there when he needed him the most. His hope.

Jimin was hope.

Jimin was leaving.

He was leaving, and Jungkook shouldn’t be holding on so tight. Not after Jimin had checked his email, had gotten accepted for the apartment on what felt like was the complete other side of Seoul. Jimin was leaving, leaving, leaving, and Jungkook would never feel that light again, not from behind the bars of a prison cell.

No, Jungkook reasoned. *Jimin isn’t leaving. He’s finding himself.*

Something sharp zagged up through Jungkook’s lungs, taking up too much space. Had him thinking back to a few days previous when he’d seen Yoongi and Hoseok kissing. Thought back to how fucking in love they were with each other, how they held stars in their eyes whenever they so much as caught each other’s eye. How there really had never been anyone else for Yoongi, at least not that Jungkook had ever seen.

And Jungkook, he wanted that so badly with Jimin. Wanted to be able to catch the stars in the sky and paint them like freckles over Jimin’s cheeks. Pluck constellations from the heavens and weave them through Jimin’s eyes, make them light up just for him, glittering so soft and warm and happy. Wanted to smooth tendrils of galaxy into Jimin’s heart, make sure he was always filled with color and life and joy.

But Jimin was leaving. And so was Jungkook, in a way. He was leaving to a place he’d never return from, a place he hadn’t quite returned from the last time he’d gone.

“Hyung…”Jungkook’s gaze was locked on someplace far away, someplace filled with stars and dreams and something in between. “Do you love Hoseok-hyung?”

Yoongi scratched the back of his neck, head dipping down a little, shadows painting the smooth lines of his face in the navy blue darkness of the kitchen. “Why do you have to ask questions like that?”

“Do you love him?” Jungkook pressed, something desperate calling inside his mind.

Yoongi looked like he wanted to curl up a hiss, slink away into the shadows and curse Jungkook for being a brat. “This is revenge for me prying into your love life, isn’t it?”

Jungkook managed a faraway smile at that. Was on the edge, splitting up the Milky Way, a balancing act he’d performed for too long. Was one step past sense and common at this point, about to slip into fractured, glittering depths from which he would never come back.

“I do,” Yoongi admitted quietly. Must’ve seen the stars in Jungkook’s eyes. Youth, raw and pure and filled with so much potential, so much… so much *life* left to live. “I love him. I love Hoseok.”

Jungkook nodded a little, eyes flitting to the painting Jimin had done a little while ago. Glorious petals woven from the night and stars, the middle a dusted pink with hints of rose gold. Stem so brittle, so thin. Jagged and black, such a contradiction with the rest of it.

A drawing of a bird flitted through Jungkook’s vision as he turned his head back to look at his hyung.

Yoongi was staring at him again, but this time his eyes were filled with nothing but an aching worry, blue and potent. “Jungkook-ah, I support you. I’d support you no matter what you do, even if I told you something different. You know that, right?”

Jungkook’s smile was genuine and bright this time, something final and decided taking him over. Smiled at his hyung.

“I love you, too, you know,” Yoongi murmured. Said it while looking straight into Jungkook’s eyes. “I just want you to be happy.”

Maybe Jungkook had been softened with too much affection recently. Maybe he was trying to grasp at something that had already slipped away, was already settled. Maybe he didn’t want to go a lifetime without Yoongi. Without Jin and Tae and Namjoon and Hoseok.

Maybe it was one of those things that made Jungkook shove aside his pride as he surged forward, wrapping his arms around his hyung, crushing him in an embrace.

“I love you, too.”

And maybe Jungkook had realized the next chapter in his story would be one of goodbyes, because he held Yoongi tighter than he ever had before.

Minwo stood across the street from the house that had now become more than familiar to him. Stood and stared up at the single light on the second floor. Could see the outline of the top of a closet, an edge of a desk, a single bedpost.

And he could see Jungkook.

Minwo saw Jungkook a lot. Nearly every night, usually late. Saw him tangle himself up with Min-ah. With the love of Minwo’s life.

And seeing Jimin, seeing him earlier that day, Minwo realized that he needed to act sooner. Needed to push things into motion before it was too late, before Jimin lost his mind completely and

forgot what love really was.

Minwo raised his phone, snapping another picture of the window as Jungkook's shadowed form came into frame. Snapped a few more as the maknae sat down on the bed, only his shoulder visible. Watched as he moved, setting something down, shuffling a few things before he switched off the light.

Minwo sorted the pictures into the categories they belonged in before a message from his partner popped up on the screen. And the two words he saw made everything fall apart with madness, green raging through his eyes.

Because those two words were damning.

She's awake.

Chapter End Notes

is it fair to say i was in tears reading all of your comments? i read every fucking one. multiple times over. god, you guys keep me moving. i'll try my best to answer all the comments next time (please please please don't think i didn't appreciate or read them or something. i literally screenshot them and reread them a billion times.)

god, i love all of you.
thank you so much.
ugh i'm crying again...
i'm gonna go now. hope you all have a good day/night.

fifty cents and a yellow blanket

Chapter Summary

URGENT!
It shouldn't be shocking at this point in the story, but this chapter contains graphic depictions of rape/non-con. If this triggers you in any way, please skip it or take a break from reading it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: You're Not There by Lukas Graham

Dusk dappled the sky with soft blues and periwinkle, streaking the color through the clouds as Jihyun walked home. Cold nipped at his skin, making its way through the threadbare patches worn into his jacket. He shivered a little at the autumn air, rubbing his arms as he weaved between street lamps.

It wasn't that he didn't have a place to go. He just didn't want to go there.His walk home from school was the best part of his day, and often he found himself lost, twisting and turning down new roads just to see if he could get lost for a few more hours.

Jimin was usually with him. But his older brother had started street dancing, spending more and more time away from home. Away from Jihyun.

But Jihyun didn't mind. Jimin still fussed over him all hours of the day, even going so far as to ditch classes to try and spot Jihyun in his own. Somehow found a way to make the lunch ladies give them food even though they had no money. Raided the lost and found for coats or jackets they could use, always giving Jihyun the warmest, the best. Made sure Jihyun was always safe, always fed, always warm at night.

So Jihyun was happy to see his brother do something for himself. It just meant that Jihyun wandered farther every night, never wanting to go back home. Because even though their mother had promised to stop her drugs, and even though their father promised over and over again not to drink, it was always the same thing when he walked through the door.

Broken promises.

Needles.

Fists.

Jihyun wandered a little more, shoving It from his mind. Wandered and wandered until periwinkle was pulled from the sky, laced through his head. Until he looked up at the stars and wondered how long he'd been walking. Until the cold started to burn his skin, giving him enough motive to find a warm place again.

So he turned around. Walked back, slowly tracing the path he'd taken. Honestly wouldn't have minded never going back home again if it wasn't for the people that forced him to stay with his

parents. Didn't want to leave Jimin, either.

And so he meandered back home, knowing his mother would probably be high as the clouds, his father still at the bars. Only worried about Jimin worrying.

And when he got to the cracked cement steps, the dead grass and cigarette butts and boarded windows, he knew he was home. Just stared at the front door like he did every night, wondering why he had to go inside. Why a ten year old couldn't just live on their own, make their own way through the world because adults were useless.

He sighed, pushing his legs to move forward, shrinking into himself with each step. Didn't want to, didn't want to do what he did every night. Didn't want to see the people that were supposed to be his parents. Didn't care if he saw them or not.

And that was where he and Jimin differed.

Because where Jihyun's attachment to his parents was only through a warm place to sleep at night, Jimin actually cared. Actually cared about the people that made their lives hell.

Cared enough to pull the needle out of their mother's twitching body every night, set it aside, drape a blanket over her shoulders as her body slumped against whatever surface was closest. Cared enough to clean the vomit from their father's lips, turn him over so he didn't suffocate during his sleep, throw the beer bottles away and leave a glass of water by his side for when he eventually woke up.

Too much. Jimin cared too much. Cared and cared and cared: heart had always been too big, dreams too bright.

Jihyun only cared about Jimin.

The door creaked open, and Jihyun shuffled in. Eyes immediately went to his mother's body on the kitchen tiles. The occasional twitch of her fingers was the only sign that she was actually alive, arms coated with sores, face covered by strands of thin, greasy hair. Youth eaten away.

Jimin wasn't home. Jihyun saw that immediately. Mother wasn't cleaned up yet.

He made his way over to the door that went to the basement, opening it up, the dim starewell greeting him with flickering lights and musty air. He kicked his shoes off, watching as they clattered down the rickety wooden steps. Flung his worn out backpack after it before stepping back and shutting the basement door, making his way over to the kitchen.

Stepped over his mother's body to get to the fridge. Didn't find anything to eat. Closed the fridge, stepping over her frail form again to rummage through the cupboards. Finally found some instant oatmeal packets Jimin had gotten from one of his dance friends earlier that week.

Jihyun tore the package open, eating the oats dry. Made sure there was enough left for Jimin as he ate, stomach rumbling weakly.

And he waited. Because nights were a waiting game. Seeing what would spark the fuse, start a fight, make his father angry. Was something different every night. But usually it wasn't too bad, his father coming home too drunk most of the time to cause any real commotion.

But after a a few hours, as the door opened with a snapping swing, Jihyun knew it would be one of Those nights. Knew it, and was already shooting to his feet, making a mad dash towards the basement door.

“Stupid fucking police,” his father spat, stepping into the living room. “Always think they know fucking everything. Don’t know shit.”

Too late. Father spotted him.

“Jimin,” his father slurred, eyes squinting as they settled on Jihyun.

Jihyun shoved the oatmeal packet further in his jacket pocket. “I’m Jihyun.”

His father seemed to pause for a moment. Bloodshot eyes and blown out pupils and dullness. Stared at him, just stared. And Jihyun knew running was useless at this point. Was like finding a bear in the woods: you don’t run.

His father’s eyes suddenly shifted over to the twitching form on the kitchen floor. Something flashed through the dullness, something bad. And Jihyun slowly, ever so slowly sat down on the floor, limbs aching with how slowly he lowered himself to sit.

And then his father was stumbling forward towards his mother’s body. Anger, anger, anger. Always angry when he saw her like that. Same every day.

Jihyun remembered something, then. One of the reasons Jimin cleaned their mother up. Remembered how a needle was a weapon, had been used like a knife in the past, a terrifying thing in the hands of an angry drunk. Blood rushed from Jihyun’s head, world spinning around him as his father made it across the room, slamming down onto his knees by the woman’s unconscious body.

And no, no, no. This wasn’t supposed to be happening like this, with Jihyun home alone with them. Jimin, where was he? Where was his hyung? Needed someone to hide with, curl up against in the darkness of the basement. Someone to stroke his hair and kiss the top of his head and hold him so tightly Jihyun never felt alone.

Didn’t know when he’d started crying. Crying for his hyung, his older brother, his Jimin. Crying, stuttering, whimpering. Couldn’t keep the pathetic noises to himself as the world reminded him that he really was just 10 years old.

Father’s head snapped to the side, body wobbling with the action. Dull eyes settled on Jihyun and his tears. And Jihyun clapped a hand over his mouth, terror, terror, terror beating through his blood. Couldn’t run, couldn’t run. Running made him more angry. Nowhere to go.

But his father was standing up anyways; too late.

too late too late too late

Charging towards him, staggering stepps placed haphazardly, getting closer.

Jihyun’s eyes were wide, tears spilling down his cheeks, a little hiccup on its way. Frozen. Frozen. Frozen. Couldn’t, couldn’t move. And then his father was a foot away and Jihyun was going to hurt so bad tomorrow and he couldn’t, couldn’t, couldn’t-

A blur.

A blur ***slamming*** *between them, Jihyun suddenly shielded.*

Jimin.

A fist slamming into Jimin's face. And then a voice yelling at Jihyun to go downstairs. Telling him everything would be okay as his father's other fist clubbed his brother's scrawny body down into the floor. Attention diverted.

Jihyun could only watch, watch as their father picked Jimin up by the throat, smashing him into the nearest wall.

Jihyun caught Jimin's eye, then. Saw his brother give him a lopsided smile, blood dribbling down his chin. Eyes crinkled up in the corners like they always did, just smiling. Mouthing the words "it'll be okay" as their father's hands crushed his throat in an iron grip. "Go downstairs. It'll be okay."

Jihyun nodded, turning away, remembering Jimin's smile as he scurried to the basement door. Flung it open, closing it behind him as he bolted down the rickety wooden steps, almost tripping on his backpack.

And he buried himself in the moth-bitten blankets he and Jimin shared every night. Buried himself beneath them and covered his ears, heartbeat pounding through his eardrums as the faint sounds of crashing and screaming echoed through the ceiling.

Jihyun fell asleep.

Wasn't until a flash of darkness later that something woke him up. The gentle shuffling of blankets and sheets being pulled up as someone slipped beneath them. And Jihyun's sleepy heart spiked with fear as he whipped around, scrambling to see who it was.

Caught a glimpse of bruises and blood and a ripped shirt before Jimin cupped a hand over Jihyun's eyes.

"Go back to sleep, Hyunie," his brother's soothing voice came.

Jihyun tried to pry Jimin's fingers back, tried to see what their father had done. But Jimin held firm, and Jihyun stopped when he heard his brother's hiss of pain at the effort of keeping his hand over Jihyun's eyes. And so he didn't fight it. Let Jimin get settled in the blankets beside him.

"I won't look, hyung," Jihyun promised, knowing his brother too well.

Jimin hummed, something soft and amused. "You promise?"

Jihyun nodded, Jimin's hand still covering his eyes. "I won't. I just want to… I just want you to hold me."

Those words always made Jimin go soft, and Jihyun made sure to keep his eyes noticeably shut tight as the small hand slowly lifted away. And Jihyun kept them shut as he curled up next to Jimin's boney body, carefully, so carefully resting his head on Jimin's chest like he always did.

Jihyun didn't look until the next morning.

Jihyun's eyes fluttered open, brow creasing as he pushed himself up onto his elbows. Rubbed a hand over his face, turning his head to catch the time on his alarm clock. 10 am. Sighed, rubbing at his eyes some more.

It was the weekend; no classes. And it was weird. Weird that he'd dreamt of his childhood, of Jimin protecting him like that. Because it wasn't that he didn't remember those moments- of course he did. He just didn't dream.

Unsettled. Everything in him unsettled and off balance and wrong. Felt like something was wrong. Didn't know what or why, but needed to make sure Jimin was alright.

So he picked up his phone. Scrolled through his contacts until he found Jungkook's number.

But before he could call, there was a knock on the front door.

So Jihyun sighed, eyes flicking between Jungkook's contact and the door. Waited until he heard another knock before pushing himself to get out of bed, seeing that his roommate was already gone to work for the day.

And when he opened the door, his heart dropped, his eyes going wide.

Because he never would've expected this person to know where he lived.

Mood: Bible of Mermaid Pictures by Sofia Karlberg

Jimin smoothed his thumb over the 50 cent coin he'd picked up. Stared down at it as he stood in front of the police station.

Because that's how he'd done it the first time. Told someone about how he was being hurt. Had found 50 cents and managed to convince himself to run it into the police station. Had used a minuscule little coin to get him and his little brother out of hell, only to be thrown into another one.

"They're interested in adopting."

"That's great news! I'll be sure to tell the boys." An uncomfortable pause. Shuffling of papers. "What is it?"

"They can only take one."

"Mr. Choi, you said you'd try to keep them together."

"I tried. But this is a rare opportunity, and one of them finding a home is better than neither of them."

Another drawn out silence, Jimin's ear pinched with how hard he was pressing it to the social worker's door, eavesdropping.

"Which one?"

"The younger one."

Jimin shook his head, staring down at the silver circle in his palm. Hands curled around it into a loose fist, heart tripping with adrenaline and nerves and something completely terrified. Knew what he had to do this time, what truths he had to tell.

Jungkook didn't know. Jimin had left the maknae that morning days ago with a lingering kiss on his forehead as he slept. Didn't want Jungkook to try and stop him. Or, worse, didn't want

Jungkook to try and go with him. Didn't want Jungkook there for some of the things he had to say, some of the darker memories he had to spill about his time with Minwo.

"Little slut," Minwo whispered into the smooth lines of Jimin's back. Back littered with bruises and scratches and hand prints. "Wanna hear you scream."

And Jimin didn't think anything of those words; Minwo liked to talk dirty during sex. Didn't think anything of it until the tip of Minwo's cock was suddenly at his unprepared hole, thrusting in with a cruelty that fuzzed Jimin's mind out of reality.

Screamed and screamed and screamed, wailing from the agonizing pain as he was ripped apart.

"Stop, stop, stop," Jimin sobbed between screams.

"Min-ah," was Minwo's only reply, heavy with lust, lost in his merciless thrusts. "Min-ah."

Minwo's grip on Jimin's hips was bruising, felt like it'd shatter his hip bone. One hand planted firmly in the middle of Jimin's back, holding him down as he flailed to get away. Hurt so fucking bad, everything burning and sizzling and tearing.

Jimin held onto the pillow his face was pressed into for dear life, screams dying down into silent, aching sobs of agony. Knew it was over only when Minwo pulled out of him, the sound of a condom being taken off echoing through Jimin's ears. Wouldn't realize until later that the slide was so easy because Minwo's cock was slick with Jimin's blood.

And Minwo just left him there, face down on the mattress. Left him there, eyes empty, aching and swollen with tears. Left him there in his blood and sweat and crumpled sheets he'd clawed at until his fingers felt like they'd snap off.

Minwo didn't come back to bed that night, or the next morning. Only came back two days later, a scoff of irritated impatience like an arrow through Jimin's head.

"Min-ah, get up. You've pouted for long enough."

Jimin didn't respond, hadn't moved since that night. Something had snapped inside of him, something broken. Dirty, just felt dirty. Used.

Soft hands on his back, then, Jimin too numb to care about reacting to the touch. Let Minwo gently pull him to sit up, biting his tongue when hot pain shot through him.

"Min-ah, you're overreacting. You're not that hurt. You need to be tougher."

Jimin was a limp doll, head hanging, shoulders slumped, blood dried between his legs.

"Min-ah, come on. First the choking and now this. Plenty of people do this. It felt good, right?"

Jimin didn't say anything.

"It felt good," Minwo pressed, the hands holding Jimin's slumped form up tightening a little.

And so he nodded, not wanting to make his boyfriend angry.

Jimin shook his head over and over, a sick, twisted feeling working its way up through his tummy into his chest. Bile, stinging and rancid, eating up the back of his throat, touching his tongue.

No. Had to keep, had to keep his mind clear. Mind clear. Mind clear. Mind clear-

Breathe, breathe. Stop knocking his knees together. Looked like a fool standing in front, in front, standing in front of

“I don’t want to sleep with you tonight,” Jimin stated firmly, pushing away from Minwo’s reach. “Not after last time.”

Something in Minwo’s black gaze darkened just that much more. “You’re a fucking prude. God, why can’t you just forget about it? Come here.”

“No,” Jimin hissed. “Not tonight.”

“You’re in a bold mood,” Minwo warmed, trying to close the gap between them and grab Jimin’s arm, but Jimin jerked away from him. “Don’t you love me?”

Jimin nodded slowly, guilt suddenly clawing through him. “Of course I love you.”

“Then why won’t you have sex with me?”

“I just don’t feel like it tonight.”

You hurt me. You hurt me so bad last time.

“It’s been two weeks, Min-ah. I have needs.”

Jimin usually would’ve given in by now, but the agony, the terror from last time had him panicking, reeling to run away. “I’m still hurt. You hurt me a lot last time.”

“We’ve been over this. You’re fine.” Minwo tried to grab Jimin’s arm again, but Jimin slapped his hand away. That made Minwo mad.

“I’ll call the police,” Jimin spat, eyes blazing as he looked up into Minwo’s twisted face.

“And tell them what? That you’re a little gay whore who lies about everything? Because going to the police worked out so well *for you the last time you did it.”*

Jimin’s sudden fierceness died down a little, Minwo taking another step closer.

“Where was it that dancer fuck found you again? A gutter? A little gutter rat he took in because you were so pitiful.”

Shivering, Jimin was shivering.

“And how many families didn’t want you? Was it 5 or 6? I forget.”

No, couldn’t cry. Minwo didn’t like tears. Didn’t like tears because they showed weakness.

Pathetic, pathetic.

“Your brother doesn’t even want you anymore. When was the last time he even tried to call?”

Crushed down, crushed up. Jimin deflated, something crinkling in his chest, squeezing painfully.

“I’m all you have left. And who do you think they’ll believe? I’m a successful businessman. You lived on the streets. You slept in a gutter while your brother slept in a bed because nobody wanted you. You’re worthless.”

And then Minwo was right there, bruising grip tightening like a vice around Jimin's forearms. Smacked him back into the wall-

Got kicked out for the first time.

No.

Breathe.

Don't go back there. Don't give him that satisfaction. Don't let him in. Don't let him in. Don't let him in. Don't-

"Jimin-ssi?"

Jimin's head snapped to the side, hands shaking so hard he dropped the silver coin in his palm. Faintly watched as it rolled off the curb and into a drain with a metallic clatter.

"Hayoon-ssi?" Jimin blinked at the petite lady in the red jacket.

"How are you?" She asked a little stiffly. Looked nervous, eyes flitting over Jimin's form, refusing to really look him in the eye for too long.

"I'm doing good." Jimin forced a smile, turning to indicate to the store behind him. "Just on break and decided to check out this store. I work nearby."

"Oh," Hayoon said with a little nod. "It's good to see you. I haven't seen you in weeks, actually."

Jimin shrugged lightly. "I've been… I've been busy."

Hayoon twirled a lock of ebony hair around a dainty finger, Jimin's eyes following its dance as it caught the cloudy afternoon light. Watched as she shifted almost nervously. "Kook told me you got an apartment."

Jimin nodded, felt like something was stuck in his throat. Couldn't get over the weird feeling whenever he was around her. The feeling that he'd seen her before, seen her somewhere. But he refused to think too much on it, reminding himself that if he had seen her, it was probably from the few court hearings he'd been to.

"I- yeah. I moved out two days ago."

"That sounds exciting. I'm sure you must be so… so…"

"I'm happy," Jimin supplied with a little nod. "I love my apartment."

Hayoon's smile remained uneasy, eyes flicking over Jimin's face. Hand seemed to be clutching something in her pocket, other one still tugging and twirling that lock of hair.

"I heard your sister woke up," Jimin broke the pause, a sad smile taking over his face. Remembered that morning four days previous after Yoongi and Hoseok had caught them kissing. Remembered how they'd woken up to Taehyung and Jin knocking the air out of them as they pounced on Jimin and Jungkook's sleeping forms.

"She's awake!" Jin was practically screaming.

Jungkook gasped next to Jimin's ear, scared out of his slumber. Immediately grumbled something rather grumpy sounding, arms tightening around Jimin's waist, urging him to stay tucked into his

chest, legs entwined.

But Jimin was wide awake. Wide awake because those words could only mean one thing. So he shoved at Jungkook's chest, thumping his shoulder to wake him up.

But Jin was already reaching over, hands finding the spots where Jungkook's nipples would be and pinching. And Jimin, Jimin couldn't help the dirty thought that flew into his head as Jungkook immediately reacted, body wriggling to get away, obviously sensitive.

"Jungkook, she's awake! She's awake!"

Jungkook had immediately woken up after that. Looked numb, spaced out, eyes wide for almost a full minute as the news crashed down upon the two of them.

And then Jungkook kissed him. Right there, in front of everyone. Kissed him full on the mouth, tears already blurring their world.

Nobody was shocked.

That made Jimin blush more than the kiss did.

Jimin's smile melted. The excitement had been short lived.

"She's still… she still doesn't show any signs of coming to," Hayoon whispered, voice too heavy, too hurting.

A vegetative state… might never recover… has more severe brain damage than the doctors thought…

She might never be able to even talk again. Might remain forever just a limp body hooked up to machines, eyes dull and glossed over with nothingness. Showed no signs of regaining her mind anytime soon.

And it must be so tragic, so agonizing for Hayoon, Jimin thought. To keep losing someone in different ways, over and over. "I'm so sorry," Jimin offered, though he knew it wouldn't do anything to ease her pain at all. "She didn't deserve this."

"Nobody deserved any of this," Hayoon muttered, a faraway haze in her eyes. And if Jimin didn't know better, he'd say there was something akin to guilt in her gaze as well. Small and blossomed, something she regretted. "I'm worried about Jungkook the most, though."

Jimin's mind went back to that awful resignation in Jungkook's eyes as the darkness had settled in once more. Didn't like it, didn't like how Jungkook's fire was just gone. How he seemed to have accepted the fact that he was going to prison, especially with the news of a new witness willing to testify in court against him.

Jimin hadn't seen Jungkook since he'd moved out. Had been preparing himself for what he had to do. But he'd been standing in front of the police station, standing there for over a fucking hour, stuck in his own mind. Knew he wasn't even close to being able to force himself to go inside and spill his secrets.

He had to. He had to, to save Jungkook. Because he could; he could save the young man he loved.

Nobody would believe you.

“You know me and him… me and him, we’re just friends. You know that, right?”

Jimin nodded slowly, thinking back to the last time he’d seen Jungkook. Long, dark lashes fluttering against his cheeks, eyes heavy with sleep, body painted in early morning light. Remembered leaning down and brushing Jungkook’s bangs aside, planting a kiss on his forehead, lips lingering. Hadn’t seen him since.

“He loves you a lot.”

Jimin’s eyes widened, heart thumping and stuttering in his chest. “He shouldn’t.”

“But he does.”

Jimin nodded again, heart panging, twisting, wrenching with the need to see Jungkook again. Kiss him, hold him close, whisper promises into his chest. But he couldn’t, not until he came clean to the police. Until he broke himself out of his little cage of memories.

Who would believe you?

“I’ve gotta go,” Jimin muttered, offering Hayoon a small, weary smile. “It was nice seeing you.”

Hayoon nodded, shifting from foot to foot. “Yeah, it was… it was nice.”

Jimin was turning, turning to leave when Hayoon called out to him. Stopped in his tracks, turning back to look at her. And she looked so tired, completely exhausted. Was clutching something in her fist, now out of her pocket. Held it out to Jimin.

Jimin frowned, slowly holding out his open hand.

“I’m sorry, Jimin-ssi.” And she dropped something into his hand. Something black. Took his a second to realize it was a USB drive, all new and sleek looking, warm from being in Hayoon’s grip for so long. “I’m so sorry.”

And then Hayoon was rushing away, disappearing behind a corner before Jimin could even blink. He eyed the black USB with curiosity, running his thumb along the polished surface. Wondered what could possibly be on it to make Hayoon act like that.

Jimin pocketed the USB with a small frown, not knowing how he would even be able to use it seeing as he didn’t have a computer. But he felt like whatever was on it was important, needed to be seen. So he would have to find a computer soon.

For now though, his frown remained, his legs locking up at the thought of going into the police station. And so, he turned away, shame nipping his heels, knowing he wouldn’t be able to speak just yet.

The USB was heavy in his pocket.

Later that day, Jungkook sank down onto the plush pillows covering his bed. Sighed, rubbing at his eyes, blinking blearily as he put up his feet after a long day at court.

It hadn’t gone good.

Minwo hadn’t been there.

Jungkook was a little more than relieved. Didn't know if he'd be able to stomach the sight of him after all the things Jimin had told him. Even the ones he hadn't. Because Jimin's eyes, they spoke enough. They'd always spoken enough, even before Jungkook had understood what to understand.

"You okay?"

Jungkook lifted his head from his pillow, bangs hanging low over his eyes. Didn't have the energy to really respond: just blinked at Hayoon. Couldn't even open his mouth, throat still filled with weary words and tiring defenses.

"Just confess. Just end this and tell us why you did what you did to our little girl. This has gone on long enough."

"I didn't do anything. I didn't."

"Yes, you did. You're a monster and a liar."

"Mrs. Lee-"

"No. He is. He-- you, you're such a-"

"Mrs. Lee, sit down."

"Look at those pictures. Look at what you did to her."

"Mrs. Lee!"

"It's been months. Months, and I know you did it. You did it, and you need to confess."

Banging of the gavel. "Mrs. Lee, sit down!"

"Monster."

Jungkook hadn't been called a monster to his face since the last court session six months previous. He wasn't used to it, not anymore. Hurt was fresh and sharp in his chest, everything burning and burning and burning. Like it was his first day in court all over again.

Everything, everything ached and ached and ached, shrivelling up the ashes inside his rib cage. Ashes and blossoms, a strange, confusing little mix of things, things and things and things.

Mixed up, mixed up, mixed up.

"Jungkook."

Jungkook looked up from where his gaze was fixed on his feet, stretched out on the bed in front of him. Looked up to meet Hayoon's dark, elegant gaze. Sleek black hair and slim figure and prominent cheekbones, pretty slanted eyes trained so tentatively on him.

"She's wrong."

Jungkook nodded mutely, just staring, mind still spinning with the whirlwind of emotions that'd always come with the trials. But it was different this time.

Different because before he would've already been tangled up in bed with the woman standing in front of him. Would've fucked out all his feelings, driving himself to focus on not focusing, losing himself in something he could control instead of something he couldn't. Different because he'd felt

so alone all those months ago, even with his hyungs and Hayoon. Had felt alone and angry and full of spite.

He wasn't now. Was just tired. It was hard sorting through everything going through his head.

And with the new witness, some backwater cleaning person who hadn't come forward until now, he felt the handcuffs slowly inching around his wrists, ready to snap closed. Cold and biting and sharp, promising years of bars and bruises and branded insults.

"They won't get far with that bullshit witness, Kook. You know that."

"Do I?" Jungkook asked softly, eyes flitting up to the ceiling.

"Kook…"

Jungkook forced himself to take a deep breath, lungs filling with Jimin's lingering scent as the yellow blanket shone beneath him. Absently curled his fingers over it, longing. Heart aching, needing Jimin to come back.

He promised to be there, to stay. He promised.

But it was unfair to think like that, not when Jimin was going through his own trials. It wasn't fair for Jungkook to remember Jimin's promise. Wasn't fair for him to miss Jimin so fucking much, to miss their nightly glasses of water and morning french fries and cuddles with the yellow blanket. It wasn't fair.

"Jungkook-ah?"

Jungkook wiped away the little hot tear that'd tracked down his cheek. "I'm just tired," he whispered. "I'm just… in just so tired."

The bed dipped, and Jungkook knew Hayoon had sat down. Felt her hand on his shoulder, rubbing a little to soothe him. But as much as he loved Hayoon and valued her as a friend…

"I think your heart is hurting from more than the court hearing today," Hayoon murmured.

Jungkook shook his head, blinking rapidly to keep any more tears from falling.

"Jungkook…"

Jungkook's head swiveled, finally peering up at Hayoon. Saw something hurting and guilty in her eyes, but her lips were pursed. Almost as if she wanted to say something, but was holding back.

"I'm sorry," was all she said.

Jungkook just curled more into the yellow blanket.

Chapter End Notes

thank you for reading... sorry again about taking so long. I have almost no time to write with my studying, so most of this chapter has actually been written on busses and

trains and metros.

also, thank you all again for your sincere and engaging comments. I really do read every one.

my tumblr is “idreaminmono”

thank you all again so much!

brave, brave, brave

Chapter Notes

> URGENT!
> This chapter contains graphic depictions of gagging and vomiting. Please, please, please take a break or skip the flashback if it triggers you in any way. Please. Your mental health is more important than reading this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mood: Consequences by Camila Cabello

Jimin watched his feet as he walked, backpack slung over his shoulder, USB drive in hand. Headphones on, little CD player whirring lightly with the disk inside, *Mono* pouring into his ears. He ran a thumb over the USB, curiosity always piqued when he thought about how Hayoon had given it to him so suddenly.

It'd been a week now. A week of walking to and from the police station after work or during his lunch breaks, trying to build up the courage to go inside, to spill his secrets. But he couldn't, failing every fucking time. Couldn't, always broken apart by dark eyes and cruel words. Couldn't bring himself to tell another person, let alone the whole world, what had been done to him for 2 years.

You're doing it for him, Jimin reminded himself.

Because Jimin knew if he went back to Jungkook, if he gave in to what his heart wanted, he wouldn't be able to leave again. To do what needed to be done. To speak. And he hated himself for that, for being the way he was. Knew anyone else would've been able to do both. But not him, never him. He had to do this alone, because that's the way he'd always done things.

Coward.

Jimin cringed, tucking the USB back into his pocket, trying desperately to drown out the words in his head. Drown them out with music, with *Mono.* But the words, they'd been persistent, had stuck to the walls of his mind like darts. Sharp, swift, deadly. Chipped at the already weak foundation he'd built around himself.

I gave you everything.

Jimin shook his head, brow creasing with the steadily thrumming headache he'd been nursing the past few days.

My little bitch.

Shook his head again and again, rubbing at his temple. Turned up the volume on his CD player. Turned it up so loud it was blasting through his ears, knew other people would be able to hear it through the headphones.

Show me how sorry you are.

Bile, bile stinging the back of Jimin's throat. And he was already at his apartment, hands shaking

as he struggled to slot the key into the lock. Leaned his forehead against the cool surface in front of him, eyes shut tight, heart beating, beating, beating up to gag him, pushing that bile.

Turned the key sharply, shoving the front door open and nearly tripping as he rushed inside. Door slammed shut, lock clicking, back pressed against the wall. Eardrums hurt from how loud the music was.

Sudden, these moments were always so sudden. Couldn't stop the words that shivered through his mindscape. Couldn't stop, couldn't stop. Was frustrated, frustrated with himself for always being so weak, heart too soft. Always so malleable, so naive, so…

Took a deep breath. Lungs shuddering with how much air they held. Head went a little light as Jimin slowly let the breath go. Took another breath in, let it out. In and out. Breathing, breathing slowly. Trying to slow himself down.

Jungkook. Needed Jungkook.

Jungkook wasn't here.

Jimin had left him, too.

He'd left, left, left. Jimin always fucking left. Always, always. Never stayed, never fucking stayed. Couldn't do anything right, never. It was always his stupid heart, always so foolish. And he'd left.

I'll be here for you.

Jimin's hands were shaking, knuckles rattling as he ran his fingers through his hair, smoothing his bangs back from his forehead. Swallowed hard, eyes pinched shut, drawing breath after shuddering breath as cold sweat pricked the back of his neck, his throat.

Jungkook, he missed Jungkook. Heart lurched violently in his chest as his stomach turned sharply. Bile choking at the back of his tongue, throat full. Missed Jungkook so bad, his soul wrenching and grasping and clawing for the man he loved.

Jimin dropped his backpack off his shoulder, his headphones yanked off his head, *Mono* still whirring dizzyingly through his ears. And he was stumbling, stumbling down the small hall and almost tripping into the bathroom. Landed on his knees with a crack as he braced his hands on the toilet.

Because Jungkook hadn't just become a part of Jimin's life, he'd infused himself into Jimin's heart. And Jimin was tearing himself apart inside, trying to find the strength to do too many things. Trying to stay away, trying to find the courage he needed to confess, trying to beat out Minwo's voice in his head once and for all.

He gagged, heaving over the toilet bowl, trying to calm himself, his roiling stomach. Gagged again, stomach twisting, wringing itself out.

Minwo's hands were on him, dragging him into the bathroom. Jimin clawed at those hands, choking as his collar cut uncomfortably into his throat. Kicked his legs at the ground, trying to escape. Trying, trying to get away.

Minwo shook Jimin hard, other hand reaching down and pinching around Jimin's throat, choking him on purpose. "Stop fucking around. You know what you did, Min-ah."

Jimin's little fingers were prying, scratching at Minwo's grip, a pathetic sob held in the back of his

throat as Minwo flung Jimin towards the toilet. Jimin gasped in a breath right before his forehead cracked against the lip of the bathtub.

Jimin gagged again, this time spitting bile into the little ring of water below. Hands shaking, shaking.

But Jimin didn't have any time to regain himself, not as there was a hand on the back of his neck, nails digging through sensitive skin. Hauled Jimin up from where he'd landed, giving him a harsh shove towards the toilet.

Jimin's hands flailed out to catch himself before he could knock his head into the toilet, too. Looked up at Minwo, desperately trying to understand what his boyfriend wanted.

"Today's Friday, Min-ah. Think really, really fucking carefully about what that means. About what you did wrong."

Jimin shook his head, pounding a weak fist against the toilet seat.

"Friday?" Jimin repeated, voice hoarse. Heart pounding quick as a rabbit's, lungs seizing as he struggled to shove in breath after breath. "Minwo-ssi, I don't-"

Minwo kicked Jimin, the toe of his shoe digging right into Jimin's ribs. "You said you'd get rid of them for me."

"Get rid of what?" Jimin wheezed out through the pain.

Minwo leaned down, eye to eye with Jimin. Hand, hand reaching out and cupping Jimin's face. Pinched Jimin's cheek so hard he knew it would bruise. "Your fucking fat cheeks."

~~*You need to work out more, Min-ah.*~~

~~*For you, Minwo-ssi. I'll work out for you.*~~

~~*Min-ah?*~~

~~*Yes?*~~

~~*Maybe you shouldn't eat tomorrow. You know, just to help get rid of your cheeks.*~~

~~*Oh... Okay.*~~

~~*You need to look good for me.*~~

Jimin's eyes widened, recalling the conversation he'd had with Minwo the previous week. Saw the spark in Minwo's eyes as his boyfriend knew Jimin had remembered. "I'm sorry," Jimin tried desperately. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Minwo pointed at the toilet.

Jimin blinked, not knowing what to do.

“Puke it up.”

Jimin dry heaved, clutching at his stomach as his bangs hung sweaty and low over his eyes.

Jimin shook his head. Shook his head, eyes so wide they pricked with tears. “Minwo-ssi, please. Please. I’m sorry.”

Minwo was an impatient man. “Puke. It. Up.”

The piece of bread in Jimin’s stomach felt like an iron weight. “No, no. I’m sorry.”

Minwo delivered a round of swift kicks to whatever soft flesh he could hit. Jimin cried out, scooting back, almost wedging himself between the toilet and bathtub. But he couldn’t get far, not before Minwo was grabbing him again, yanking him back out. Pressed Jimin into the toilet so hard Jimin started gasping out strangled cries.

“Stop wasting my time!”

Jimin’s eyes were burning, burning with tears too salty, too toxic. Shook his head as he stared down into the toilet bowl.

And then Minwo was prying Jimin’s jaw open, and Jimin spluttered, rearing back, trying to get away, get away. But Minwo’s other hand was supporting the back of Jimin’s skull with a solid strength that refused to let Jimin’s head budge. And then there were three fingers pressing flat on Jimin’s tongue, the taste of skin sour, dry.

And Jimin didn’t think, didn’t think as he bit down as hard as he could, molars and all.

Minwo practically roared.

Minwo ripped his hand from Jimin’s mouth, staring at the streaks of blood that were sliding down his fingers. Stared at the blood, at Jimin’s bite mark as if it was one of the wonders of the world. Almost confused, watching a drop of blood splatter on the bathroom tile at his feet.

Jimin curled into himself as Minwo’s black eyes finally shifted from his bleeding fingers. Shifted, latching onto Jimin’s gaze. And Jimin whimpered, actually whimpered, scooting away until his back pressed to the bathtub.

Minwo was slow this time, keeping Jimin’s gaze the whole while as he knelt down in front of Jimin. Knelt, holding his hand up for Jimin to see. And then he reached forward, cupping Jimin’s bruised cheek with his bloody hand. And Jimin was frozen, frozen as Minwo proceeded to rub his hand over the rest of Jimin’s face, smearing the blood.

frozen, everything frozen

didn’t know what to do, how to move, what to think

mind was rather empty

Empty as blood touched his lips, fingers prying their way between his teeth again. And Jimin let it

happen, the lack of emotion in Minwo's eyes pinning him down. Staring at each other, just staring. Minwo gently reached his other hand around to cup the back of Jimin's skull once more.

And then Minwo's fingers hit the back of Jimin's mouth, and his tongue arched up. Arched up, tasting the bitterness of his boyfriend's fingers. Fingers dug in deeper, everything constricting, tears pricking Jimin's eyes as Minwo stared unblinkingly at him, just watching. Fascinated.

Jimin gagged.

Gagged around Minwo's fingers. Bile surging up, biting and rancid. Gagged again as fingertips hit the back of his throat. Tears now streaming down Jimin's face, eyes rolling back into his head as he heaved, stomach convulsing, puke bubbling up around Minwo's hand.

"That's right," Jimin heard Minwo's gentle murmur. "Puke it all up."

Jimin's gag this time was violent, legs kicking up, arms flailing to brace Minwo's shoulders. Jimin's head was guided forward so the glops of half-digested bread fell into the toilet.

"Good boy, Min-ah," Minwo praised, voice so soft, so gentle. Jimin heaved, another spray of bile sliding down Minwo's hand. "So perfect, doing so good."

Minwo's fingers plunged back in, again and again until Jimin was sobbing wetly, mouth and chin and neck drenched with vomit. Body curling forward, eyes rolling back in his head with each precise plunge. Collapsed against the toilet as soon as Minwo deemed his stomach empty enough, head hanging, body trembling so furiously he could barely stutter in breaths fast enough.

And then Jimin felt something wet wiping at his face, his neck. Cleaning him up, rag coming away pink with the blood from Minwo's hand. Toilet flushing, Jimin suddenly swept up into strong arms. Carried away. Set down in what Jimin knew to be a bed.

And Minwo took care of him, cleaning Jimin up properly, getting him a new pair of clothes and a cup of water. Kissed Jimin's forehead tenderly, brushing damp bangs back as Jimin continued to tremble.

Jimin slammed the butt of his palm against the toilet seat, shaking his head. Stood up too fast, head spinning, world whirling around his eyes as he shoved the memory away, hating himself for always remembering too much.

Because some things Jimin had locked up tight in the recesses of his thoughts. Some things, Jimin had honestly forgotten, or perhaps had forced himself to forget. But he hated it either way, how he let such things affect him so much, always had.

Jimin decided he was done dry heaving for the day.

He fought back that memory with everything he had until he was standing in front of the sink, splashing water over his face, getting rid of the blood Minwo had smeared over his cheeks that day. Scrubbed at his arms furiously, trying to forget, forget, forget.

And before he could look at himself, before he could catch his own reflection, he stumbled away. Shuffled out of the bathroom, closing the door behind him. Water dripped onto the light hardwood floor beneath his feet.

His apartment was still so empty. So new and clean and quiet. Didn't have enough money yet to

buy any real furniture, only had a fold up table and some cheap plastic chairs. Didn't even have a bed, just a mattress on the floor. But it was his. This place was his, and he'd worked so hard to get it, to get to this point. And he was proud of himself, he was. But he was… he was so…

alone

He was alone.

And the silence, Jimin had felt that silence for a year, trapped in Minwo's house. Trapped by his own demons, unable to leave. He'd been trapped, and then he'd escaped. He'd escaped, so why did it feel like he was in a cage here? Not locked up by Minwo, but rather himself?

He'd felt free with Jungkook. Jungkook and his hyungs. Jimin's hyungs.

Missed them, Jimin missed them all so much. And he'd left, he'd left Yoongi and Tae and Jin, too, even though they all knew where he lived. Even though he left with every intention of seeing them again, and seeing them soon.

And as Jimin slowly made his way over to the fridge, the thought that he should close the blinds the next time he decided to have a fucking mental breakdown flitted through his mind. Night, it was night, and just how long had Jimin been pressed up against the toilet? How long? How long had he been frozen there, gagging?

Jimin smacked his forehead lightly with his palm, shaking his head, eyes shutting. "You're so fucking stupid."

You're a good person… and you're my friend.

Jimin flinched, this time for a whole other reason.

You matter, and so does your future.

Jimin could see it in his head, the way Jungkook's eyes would light up. Smiles so easy, so full and beautiful and never half-hearted. How his passion, his drive, his spirit spread like vines, touching everything, turning even the dullest of days into gold.

Happiness suits you.

Jimin nodded a little, almost as if Jungkook was there with him. As if Jimin hadn't left. As if he wasn't staying away, trying, trying, trying to free Jungkook using his own cage, his own lock and key.

I forgive you.

At that, Jimin was biting his lip, forcing himself to finally take the step needed to the fridge, stomach already rumbling faintly. Hadn't had anything to puke up because he'd been using his lunch breaks to go to the police station. Hadn't had dinner yet, appetite suddenly returning full force.

He opened the fridge, almost deflating at the emptiness of it. A bottle of pear juice, some lettuce, a half of a tomato, some milk. Nothing else. And even though Jimin had a loaf of bread in his cupboard, he didn't think he could stomach the sight of it right now.

Jimin had lived off of less. Much, much less. Taste of raw oats touching his tongue as it did sometimes. So he grabbed all the contents of his fridge, setting them on the counter. Was going to

prepare himself a meal fit for a king, for sure. Smiled at the thought, knowing Yoongi would have something equally as dry and sarcastic to say.

But as Jimin was reaching into his cupboard, grabbing for one of the two plates he had, there was a knock at his door.

Mood: Lost My Mind by Alice Kristiansen











Jungkook's stomach flipped as the phone was snatched from his grip, the little clips he'd collected of Jimin whisked from his view. Jungkook's eyes snapped up to see who'd taken it away, who'd robbed him of-

"I've asked you like four times what you want for dinner," Jin huffed.

Jungkook kicked at Jin's leg from the edge of his bed, wrapping himself further into the yellow blanket. Idly reached up, pawing at the air, no real energy left to fight for his phone. "Give my

phone back."

Jin lifted the phone out of Jungkook's reach, sighing a little impatiently. "Jungkook-ah, you've been hiding here all week. You need to come downstairs."

"I'm not hungry, hyung."

Jungkook didn't miss how Jin's eyes shifted to the untouched lunch he'd been brought. Didn't miss how something sad, something desperate flashed through his hyung's gaze. And he didn't miss when Jin tried to hide it, attention turning back to the maknae. "Yah, where'd my muscle pig go?"

Jungkook tried to smile, the very corner of his lip twitching up. But he knew, and he knew that Jin knew, that the smile was a little more than pathetic.

Jin's poor attempt at humor died quickly, shifting awkwardly from foot to foot. "What are you even looking at?" Jin glanced at Jungkook's phone screen, and Jungkook was already turning his head away from his hyung. Heard the deep inhale, Jin sighing heavily as the bed dipped, a cautious hand on Jungkook's shoulder.

Quiet, too quiet. Jin just sitting there, trying to comfort Jungkook in the only way he really knew how to. "Jungkook-ah," Jin murmured, something broken, too broken in his low voice.

Jungkook didn't bother, didn't even bother holding back the tear that escaped, sliding hot over the bridge of his nose, landing on his pillow.

"Come downstairs. Please. It… it might not make you feel better, but… we miss you, Jungkook-ah. We miss our little Jungkookie."

Just as Jungkook didn't bother fighting the lazy tears dripping onto his pillow, he also didn't bother telling Jin what his hyung already knew. Jungkook, the innocent, shy little boy from Busan was gone. Gone and crushed beneath the heel of a crime he hadn't committed. The carefree kid that'd moved in with them so many years ago had vanished, replaced with trials and prison and violence.

And he heard the plea in Jin's voice, not just to go downstairs. He heard the driving panic that'd slowly been winding up since the last court hearing. Heard what his hyung hadn't said.

We miss you because there isn't much time left. We'll spend the rest of our lives missing you.

Because even though Jisoo had woken up, she was still in a vegetative state. Awake, but unresponsive. And the courts were getting more desperate to resolve the trials once and for all. The evidence was all there, mounting with every testimony, every picture, every lawyer. It was all there, and it was finally time for Jungkook's house of cards to come crashing down. He knew it, and so did the rest of the world.

"Jungkook-ah, don't make me get Yoongi."

The weary smile on Jungkook's lips was a little more genuine this time, not all that forced. He finally looked up at Jin, who had turned off Jungkook's phone and set it aside, hand still resting on Jungkook's shoulder. "Yoongi-hyung is probably making out with Hoseok-hyung as we speak," Jungkook pointed out, voice quiet, strained. "I *dare* you to go get him."

Jin seemed to brighten at even the little bit of attitude Jungkook had given him, settling back into the familiar between them. "You brat," Jin laughed, softly swatting Jungkook's arm. "Get out of bed. You can play on your phone downstairs."

It took about ten more minutes and a million more threats to get Jungkook to leave his bed, but Jin somehow managed to do it. In no time, Jungkook found himself seated on the couch Jimin used to sleep on, except now it was him with the yellow blanket. And he was watching, watching as Jin prepared food, savory scents wafting through Jungkook's nose.

The sizzle of the frying pan faded away as Jungkook's gaze wandered around the room. Shifted to Taehyung, sitting across from him on the arm chair, idly staring at his phone with a little pout on his lips. Caught how Tae's gaze wandered up from his phone to one of the paintings he and Jimin had done together, eyes lingering on it for far too long as his pout turned into an even bigger pout.

And Jungkook found himself looking around the room, too. Looking at all the little traces Jimin had left behind. All the little things that spoke about how Jimin hadn't just stayed with them, but *lived* there, too. Lived and loved and laughed.

Dozens of game and movie nights, afternoon walks and lazy mornings making breakfast because Jin hadn't wanted to. Times they'd laughed together, other times they'd cried together. Not just Jungkook and Jimin, but all of his hyungs, too. Jimin had become a massive part of their family, had woven himself into the tapestry that had been their lives. And so it wasn't hard for Jungkook to find all the little traces of Jimin still scattered through the house.

The dozens of half-empty sauce bottles Jin had out for what he was cooking, having been used to wake Jungkook up with french fries. A mug Tae had painted just for Jimin, the image of a flying bird dashed across it's glossy, ceramic surface. Various nick nacks Yoongi had brought back for Jimin to look at, like a wooden figurine from Namjoon or some polaroids Hoseok had found still laying around at his house. And, of course, Jimin's painting of flowers hanging on the wall by the kitchen table.

And all of these little things, all of them pounded through Jungkook's skull, rocking hollow in his heart. Cradled his lungs, filling them up with something thicker than air, something quiet and sad and melancholic. Filled him up as it broke him apart, thinking that even this horrible feeling drenching his soul was better than the emptiness that had come before it, before Jimin.

And Jungkook missed Jimin so much, missed everything about him, even the occasional arguments. Missed the full-bodied giggles and stunning smiles and ocean eyes. Missed waking up with Park Jimin in his arms, missed watching him paint or dance or sleep. Missed the broken parts of Jimin, the whole parts, the parts that were somewhere in between.

Missed everything.

And when a plate of grilled meat and vegetables was set in front of him, along with a bowl of ramen, Jungkook knew he wasn't doing a very good job of writing the last chapter in his book of goodbyes. Another page turned, another paragraph of farewells. Knew it was his job to write these words well, or he'd regret it for the rest of his life, locked behind bars.

But he couldn't help it, couldn't help if maybe his heart was just a little bit broken. If he missed Jimin a little more than he should have.

"Aish," Jin grumbled.

Jungkook's eyes snapped to his hyung, who had very obviously been watching him for a moment, eyes shifting between Jungkook and Taehyung, both of which were too quiet, too solemn. And then Jin was moving, getting a container out of a cupboard, packing up the rest of the food. Set it on the counter, pulling on his jacket and shoes, grabbing the car keys.

“Where are you going?” Jungkook asked, hands curling into fists around the yellow blanket.

Jin grabbed the large container of food, sparing Jungkook and Taehyung one last glance before opening the front door. “I’m doing what none of you idiots will.”

And then Kim Seokjin was gone, and Jungkook was still sitting on the couch, a plate of food untouched in front of him.

Mood: Whiskey (Lost Recording #5) by Mark Diamond

Jimin swallowed his nerves as he slowly crept towards the front door, the sound of another knock pounding through his empty apartment. And he couldn’t stop thinking, thinking about who it could be. Sure, Hoseok had been to see him a few times that week already, but never this late at night. And it certainly wouldn’t be Jungkook. Jimin knew that for sure.

Black eyes were in his head again, and Jimin was trembling, hands shaking violently as they hovered above the door knob. Holding his breath, lungs aching for air, his hand closing around the handle.

And and and he couldn’t, couldn’t do it. Was already letting go, backing away. Couldn’t open the door, because what if Minwo had finally come for him? Come to take back to the hell he’d lived for too long.

Minwo, it was Minwo.

Jimin shook his head, eyes flashing around his empty apartment, dread crushing him with an iron fist.

Another furious knock, and Jimin was frozen, couldn’t even move. Just staring at the front door. And maybe if Jimin ran back to the bathroom, locked himself inside, his demons would go away. Minwo would go away. Maybe if he reached the back window, he could slip out-

“Yah! Park Jimin-ssi! Open the fucking door! I know you’re home, you brat!”

Jimin’s panic died in his chest, hearing that muffled voice. Hands stopped trembling immediately, eyes widening because what was Jin doing here so late? Jimin shook his head, feeling ridiculous for jumping to conclusions so suddenly. Exhausted, his mind was exhausted with the constant battering of memories, of emotions the whole week. And Minwo didn’t even know where Jimin lived… how could it have been Minwo?

There was another pounding knock, and Jimin snapped himself out of it, immediately stepping forward and unlocking the door, whipping it open.

Jin’s fist froze mid air, having gone for another knock, and Jimin felt warmth bloom through his chest. Those familiar brown eyes and handsome face, the fake narcissistic persona rolling off his oldest hyung in waves as Jin stared at Jimin, clearly offended. Jin was pushing past Jimin into the house before he could say anything, already ranting about the food having gone cold because of how long it took him to answer the door.

Jimin shut the door, locking it back up as Jin took off his shoes. And Jimin saw that Jin had indeed brought food, had brought a massive bowl of grilled chicken and vegetables. Was already heading towards Jimin’s little kitchen, opening the barely-used microwave and popping it in to heat it up.

Jimin watched his hyung the whole time, still standing by the front door. Just watched as Jin took in the meager amount of food set on the counter, looking around as if he'd never seen such an empty place before in his entire life. And Jimin still couldn't believe Jin was actually here, heating up food in his kitchen a little late at night.

"Wah, I know I'm handsome, Jimin-ssi. Isn't my face beautiful?"

Jimin rolled his eyes, huffing out an exasperated laugh as Jin blew him a hand kiss. So Jimin finally moved from his spot by the front door, making his way into the kitchen with his hyung, who was searching through bare cupboards for something.

"Where are the plates?"

Jimin blushed a little before opening the very last cupboard above the stove, pulling out the only two plates he owned. But Jin didn't comment on it, didn't even look phased. Just reached around Jimin and plucked the plates out, setting them on the fold up table as the microwave beeped. And it was then that Jimin noticed that Jin hadn't even mentioned the lack of food, hadn't joked about it or poked fun, had merely packed it all back in the fridge.

And then they were eating, and it was like Jimin had never moved out. Like Jin wasn't upset with Jimin for moving, like it was something completely normal, something okay. And the ease with which they fell into conversation while they ate settled Jimin, calmed him down, filled him with a sense of peace he hadn't felt all week.

When they had finished eating, Jimin thoroughly stuffed and patting his little tummy, Jimin looked over at Jin, who also looked satisfied with the meal. Was laughing at something Jimin had said, genuine smile contagious, slightly hidden behind his hand.



Jimin thought about what it would've been like to have had Jin as an older brother growing up. Thought Jin would've been the kind to play ball with him or take him out to arcades or hug him to sleep while he shivered from the bruises plastered into his skin.

Maybe would've helped Jimin to see what real, healthy love was. Would've helped pick him up after being beaten down for so many years, because that's certainly what Jin had done after they'd met. Because that's just who Jin was. Jin was someone that picked you up and made you feel like maybe the world wasn't so heavy all the time.

But, Jimin thought, maybe it didn't really matter that he hadn't grown up with Jin in his life. It

mattered that Jin was here now, and that he *did* feel like an older brother that watched out for him.

“Hyung,” Jimin murmured during a lull in their conversation. Watched as Jin quirked an eyebrow, always the playful, funny hyung. “Why are you here?”

Jin paused a bit at the question, eyes flitting between Jimin’s. Sighed, leaning back in his fold-up chair, folding his arms over his chest as his eyes filled with exasperation. “It’s so boring at home.”

Jimin quirked a brow, questioning. “Boring?”

Jin nodded, sighing again. “Everyone’s been sulking since you left. Tae’s been sulking, Yoongi’s been sulking… Jungkook’s been sulking…” The mention of Jungkook had Jimin’s heart beating in his throat, but Jin continued on. *“I’ve* been sulking, Jiminie. It’s ridiculous. We all miss your short, bratty self.”

Jimin couldn’t help the smile that tugged at his lips for a brief moment, before he was back to thinking about Jungkook. Thinking about how Jungkook was sulking because Jimin had left. And sure, the others were, too (secretly, Jimin felt a little relieved to hear they weren’t glad he was gone) but it was Jungkook. Jungkook missed him.

“Jungkook…” Jimin bit his lip, feeling a little shy bringing the maknae up. “How is he?”

Jin’s easy smile faded, something Jimin didn’t like filling his hyung’s gaze. “Jungkook-ah… he’s not doing too good. He… he misses you. He misses you a lot.”

Jimin nodded, guilt already twisting his gut. Because he’d promised, promised Jungkook he’d be there for him. But Jimin was doing that in the only way he knew how to. Was doing this so that the man he loved wouldn’t go to prison. Even so, Jimin knew his time was running out. He knew that, and yet he still hadn’t confessed. Still hadn’t gone back to Jungkook to be there, to comfort him and make sure he was okay as the world tore him down.

“I want to confess,” Jimin whispered suddenly. But even as the words left his mouth, even as they touched the air, Jimin was cursing himself. Eyes wide, mouth snapping shut, hands clenching into fists as he stared at Jin.

Jin’s eyebrows rose, tilting his head to the side, confused. “Confess to what?”

Jimin swallowed hard. “I want… I want to… confess. Tell the police what,” Jimin pulled a breath into his lungs, closing his eyes, willing his hands to unclench. “Tell the police what Minwo did to me.”

Jimin flinched a little when he felt a hand on his shoulder, and he slowly opened his eyes. Jin was gazing at Jimin, looking at him with nothing short of concern… and adoration? Was that the right word? Because Jin’s eyes were so soft and open, his expression full of nothing but understanding.

“You say ‘confess’ as if you’re the one that committed the crime,” Jin said softly.

Jimin flinched a little, twisting his fingers together in his lap. Avoided Jin’s gaze as he remembered a night so long ago now, it seemed like a dream. The night Jimin had woken up four hours after Minwo had choked him out, feeling all too disoriented, too woozy for it to be natural. And then finding out the next morning about what had happened at GCF, and the scratches on Minwo’s face and neck, how he’d showered the second time that night…

“Didn’t I? In a way?” Jimin murmured, staring at the empty plate in front of him.

“You’re a victim,” Jin said adamantly.

“A victim?" Jimin sighed, shaking his head, almost disgusted with himself. "I chose to be with Minwo. I chose to move in with him. I could’ve left at any point, and yet I didn’t. I’m not a victim. I’m a dumbass.”

You’re a good person, and you’re my friend.

Jungkook’s words rang through Jimin’s mind once again, and he found himself even more frustrated. Because he could imagine Jungkook’s disapproval, the little furrow in his brow or the way his nose would scrunch up, immediately shooting down Jimin’s negative words. And even though he hadn’t seen Jungkook in a week, the maknae was persistent, even in Jimin’s mind.

“I don’t think I have to comment on that. You look like you’re doing enough of that in your own head,” Jin said with a wary smile. “Just… just remember that you don’t have to do this alone. And while I don’t know exactly what happened, I do know that Minwo hurt you a lot. And I know that you’re still healing, and that it’s okay to feel angry with yourself. Do you realize how amazing it is that you’re wanting to go to the police? Do you realize how monumental that is?”

Jimin’s face flushed, ducking his head down, suddenly feeling silly. “But I haven’t. I’ve gone there every day the entire past week, trying to go inside, but I couldn’t. I’m a coward.”

Jin scoffed, look at Jimin with nothing short of wonder. “Coward? You think you’re a coward just because it’s taking you a little longer than a few months to unravel what this guy did to you for *years?* Jimin-ah, you’re not a coward, not even close. Because if you think you’re a coward, then me and Taehyung and Yoongi and Jungkook are all degenerate monsters.”

“You’re not-”

“We’re not,” Jin stated, “and neither are you. We’ve all been through shit. Did you know it took Tae two years to tell the police everything his father had done to him and his sister?”

Jimin chewed on his bottom lip, sighing. “But it’s Tae… he’s, he’s really… that’s just how he is. I can’t imagine how wrecked he must’ve been.”

Jin studied Jimin, just studied him. Staring, weighing things in his mind. Jimin could see that, could see how much Jin was thinking, just looking at him. And it terrified Jimin, because he was certain Jin had seen his point. Had changed his mind.

“Have you ever told your story? Your *whole* story?”

The soft words Jin had uttered surprised Jimin. Had Jimin blinking, mouth dropped open a little, gaping for words, anything he could say. “I, uh… Hoseok knows… because he’s the one that found me. I also… I’ve also told Jungkook a little here and there. And… and one other person. Min… Minwo. I told Minwo everything.”

Jin nodded a little. “And am I right… am I right when I assume Minwo used that against you?”

And tell them what? That you’re a little gay whore who lies about everything? Because going to the police worked out so well for you the last time you did it.

Where was it that dancer fuck found you again? A gutter? A little gutter rat he took in because you were so pitiful.

And how many families didn’t want you? Was it 5 or 6? I forget.

Your brother doesn't even want you anymore. When was the last time he even tried to call?

I'm all you have left. And who do you think they'll believe? I'm a successful businessman. You lived on the streets. You slept in a gutter while your brother slept in a bed because nobody wanted you.

You're worthless.

Jimin didn't say anything, but that was enough for Jin to understand.

"Jimin-ah," Jin started, all hints of fake confidence and silly antics long gone by now. This person was an older brother, one that had seen his fair share of hurt. "I think the last time you told someone your story, it only gave you pain."

Jimin swallowed hard, remembering all the times Minwo had thrown his past back in his face. Smashed him down, beat his self-esteem to a bloody pulp. Still couldn't say anything.

Jin leaned forward a little, meeting Jimin's ducked gaze. "You are so brave, even going near the police station. But I think you need to tell someone you love and trust your whole story first. Someone who will help you heal and love you for who you are, despite what happened in the past."

"I loved him," Jimin whispered, voice cut up, a tear finally tracking down his cheek. "I loved him and trusted him, and he… I trusted him. I can't do that again."

Jin swiped Jimin's tear away with the pad of his thumb, offering one of the kindest, most reassuring smiles Jimin had ever seen. "I think you already know he wasn't a good person. He wasn't normal. Whatever he did or said to you wasn't what someone who loves you would've done or said."

Jimin sucked in a breath between his teeth, more tears sliding cold to his chin. "I know."

Jin patted Jimin's shoulder. "Yoongi, Tae, Jungkook, me… you can tell any one of us. And I promise… Jimin-ah, look at me." Jimin's eyes slid up, locking with Jin's. "I *promise* you. I promise we will never, ever hurt you like that."

And Jimin believed him. And he watched Jin watching him back. Heart beat, beat hard.

"Hyung?"

Silence, waiting.

"Can I… can I tell you my story?"

Chapter End Notes

what can i say? it's been a month... i wonder if anyone is still here haha...
i kinda... yeah, i kinda hit an all time low three weeks ago. it was fanfic-worthy shit, tbh. someone snapped at me and i had a three hour panic attack that involved being frozen on a park bench late at night, wandering up and down a street, and standing at a bus stop for an hour and half watching bus after bus pass and not being able to get on one because i couldn't move... then my friend found me and ubered me home after i

broke down and started hyperventilating... so yeah i've kinda been reassessing my... mental health... um.. anyways, i'll try to have the next chapter up within the next week. um... yeah...
if anyone is still reading, thank you, and i'm sorry if this chapter wasn't very good for such a long wait.

a road that goes both ways

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Sea by BTS

Breakfast was quiet.

It was something that set Jungkook on edge as he stirred his oatmeal, playing with his spoon. Because breakfast used to be filled with Jimin's giggles, the music he'd put on while Jin cooked, the teasing tones as he pinched Jungkook's cheek and cooed at the maknae's bedhead.

Breakfast used to be so much louder. Loud in a good way. A way that made the rest of the day easier to bear. A way that made Jungkook smile from the moment his eyes fluttered open, Jimin's smile lighting his world.

Now, it was silent.

No music, no *Mono* or Agust D playing in the background as everyone talked and teased. No, now there was nothing but Taehyung sulking at the kitchen table, staring at Jimin's damn mug as he scooped fruit into his mouth, chewing with that same little pout on his lips. Looked as if he'd just lost a puppy, constantly in his own head, not even bothering to bother Jungkook anymore.

And Yoongi (he actually got up early enough to eat breakfast with them) was even less of a morning person now, if that was possible. Wore a frown as he stared at his cup of coffee, leaning back against the counter, not talking to anyone. Only smiled if Hoseok was prodding at him, making fun of him for being so grumpy. But Hoseok wasn't there, so Yoongi's mouth was set in an eternal, downturned line.

Mornings had become Jimin, filled with brightness and pastel yellows and hugs. So many hugs. Because Jimin was a koala, clinging to anyone that came near him, slipping his arms around their shoulders or curling into them as he giggled.

Mornings had become the sun rising in the sky and the birds chirping and all that other dramatic shit only writers cared about, because before it'd been nothing but another obstacle for Jungkook to get through. A never ending cycle of dark fading into light, nothing more.

Jimin had taken the morning with him, taken the sun and birds and koala hugs. Taken everything, from the first dewy rays of light warming the sky to the music that'd filled his heart. Taken it, taken it all. But Jungkook was glad if those things had followed Jimin. If Jimin was happy, surrounded by serene mornings of sunlight and singing birds.

Because of what Jihyun had told him the previous week, he knew that even if Jimin had run away, he'd run for a good reason.

So mornings weren't the same anymore.

Mornings were quiet, now. So it nearly gave Jungkook a heart attack when suddenly the front door was being unlocked, the silence interrupted. And then Jin was stepping inside, and Jungkook hadn't forgotten where Jin had gone, hadn't forgotten about the text Jin had sent them the night before saying he would be staying over at Jimin's.

And Jungkook didn't know what that had meant, but it must not have been good if Jin's appearance was anything to go by. Because his hyung's eyes were red and puffy and swollen. Obvious, it was obvious he'd been crying, had cried a lot. Hair mussed up, messy. Hands shoved in his pockets, face pale, his normally boisterous hyung withdrawn and quiet.

Jungkook's heart was beating hard, beating harder and harder and harder. Thundering and thrashing and raging in his chest, thinking about what could've happened. Because it could be anything. Anything could've happened, and what if Jimin was hurt? What if Minwo had found him, hurt him, hurt him, hurt him? What if-

"Oh my god, he's fine," Jin practically snapped, running a hand through his hair to smooth it down.

Jungkook's eyes flicked over to Yoongi and Taehyung, realizing they had frozen as well, all three of them staring at Jin with wide eyes and bated breath.

"Why have you been crying, then?" Yoongi asked, peering over the lip of his mug as he took a steady sip of coffee.

Jin swallowed hard, an awkward smile forced on his lips. "Yah, how can you ask such a blunt question? I'm a manly man. Men don't cry."

Jin was met with three deadpanned looks.

"You cried the other night when we were watching Titanic for the millionth time."

As if to prove a point, tears pricked at Jin's eyes, and Jungkook's eldest hyung was finally shutting the front door and taking off his shoes. Trying to play off his emotions. "That's none of your business."

Jungkook knew why Jin had cried while watching that specific movie, though. Because even though his hyung always pretended like everything was alright, like he was happy, Jungkook knew Jin had missed Jimin just as much as the rest of them.

"He's really okay?" Taehyung asked.

Jin rolled his eyes, sighing. "No, he's decided to learn spanish and move to Brazil. He's going to adopt a dog from Italy and a cat from Ukraine, and then he's going to become a sailor-"

"We get it," Yoongi cut in before Jin could continue. "He's okay, then?"

Jin nodded again, but Jungkook could tell there was something bothering him. Something weighing heavily on the eldest's mind. Something blue, something sad. Something that had to do with Jimin. And it only worried Jungkook that much more. Started racking his brain, thinking about what could've made Jin so sad, so hurt if Jimin was doing okay.

"Did you and Jimin-hyung fight?" Jungkook asked, almost too quietly.

Jin blinked at Jungkook. "A fight? Yah, Jungkook-ah, the only person I'm going to fight is you." Jin put up his fists, making a few fake swings in the air, ducking his head, bobbing and weaving from side to side. Looked ridiculous.

Normally, Jungkook would've play fought back, but he was too tired these days. Too worn out, too threadbare. "Then what's wrong?"

Jin stopped play boxing, the goofy mask slipping away just as quickly as it'd been donned, revealing the exhaustion in his eyes. Looked like he wanted to say something, lips parted for a moment before closing and then opening again. Fighting himself. "Jiminie's okay. He's just struggling a little right now."

Struggling, Jimin was struggling.

"He's struggling?"

"Struggling?"

"You can't just tell us he's struggling and not say anything else."

Jin huffed, the dark circles under his puffy eyes glaringly obvious as he weaved his way past Jungkook and Yoongi to the hall that led upstairs. "Listen, he's okay. We just had a really long talk and I honestly only got two hours of sleep. If you guys would stop being idiots and just go see him, you wouldn't have this problem."

"And I thought Yoongi-hyung was grumpy without sleep," Tae muttered, shoving another piece of fruit in his mouth.

"You guys are pansies," Jin grumbled before making his way down the hall, almost to the stairs. "Just go see him! Stop being stupid!" Jungkook was already walking down the hall, following Jin, wanting to get more information. But Jin sent him a look over his shoulder, obviously not in the mood to talk. "I'm going to take a nap, and if even one of you thinks about waking me up, I'll gut you."

Jungkook huffed, annoyed. Watched as Jin disappeared upstairs, closing his bedroom door, the lock echoing with a resounding click. And so he just stood there, thinking about Jimin, Jimin, Jimin. Couldn't stop the worry pounding through him, thinking about what Jin and Jimin could've talked about.

And what if Jimin had been crying all night, too?

He would need a glass of water and the yellow blanket. Would need to be held tight to make sure he didn't start trembling. Would need to be tucked in, a kiss pressed to his temple, hair smoothed back. Needed to be showered, showered with love and affection and praise. And reassured, he would need to be reassured that everything would be alright, that nothing would ever hurt him again, that he didn't need to be afraid.

And realizing all the things Jungkook was aching to do, he also came to another conclusion, one he hadn't really thought about before.

Before Jimin, he'd been solely focused on himself. *His* pain, *his* struggles, *his* rage. The unfairness of everything that had been directed at *him.* It'd eaten him up, eaten him alive. And Jimin, Jimin coming back into his life, going from a stranger to a friend and then to something more… it'd given Jungkook something else. Not a distraction, no. Not a distraction at all, but a new way of thinking, of acting.

Putting someone else's struggles first, and healing by seeing someone else heal. Growing by listening and forgiving and loving. By not thinking about just himself. It'd changed him, changed him so much that he could barely look back at the *him* from months before and not feel disgusted with how far he'd sunk.

Jimin had saved him, saved him by making him live outside of himself.

And Jimin was staying away from Jungkook for a reason, and he knew that. He knew that whatever was keeping Jimin away was something he should respect, even if Jimin had promised. Promised to stay, to be there. Promised to hold Jungkook close during his last moments of freedom, of youth.

And if Jimin was feeling even a little bit better without Jungkook, struggling or not, it was worth it to stay away.

Jungkook trusted Jimin.

Jihyun's heart dropped, beating low and fast in his chest, adrenaline spiking through his body. Because Jungkook was standing in the hall outside his dorm, dark circles under his eyes, looking so sad and hurt and tired. And all Jihyun could think was that something had happened, something bad.

Jihyun grabbed Jungkook's arm, pulling him into the dorm and shutting the door, glad his roommate was already gone for the day. Because Jihyun was panicking. Never panicked, but felt it now, too many thoughts crowding, screaming in his head.

"Jimin, is he okay? Is he okay?" Jihyun was cupping Jungkook's shoulders, almost shaking him. "Tell me he's okay."

Jungkook seemed a little dazed, eyes wide, blanked out. And Jihyun just panicked all the more, couldn't stop the images filling his mind. Images of a brutish fist slamming down into his older brother's body, Jimin always the one to protect him. Couldn't stop seeing the bruises, the blood, the sacrifice.

What if he was gone?

what if, what if Jimin had finally been

what if his brother was

what if

"Hey, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Jihyun-ssi," Jungkook was saying, and it was only that that Jihyun realized he was breathing a little too hard, a little too fast. Clutching onto Jungkook with white knuckles, sweat beading along his brow.

"Is he okay?" Jihyun demanded, desperation blocking out everything but the other 97 liner in his hands.

Jungkook cupped his hands over Jihyun's. "That's… that's why I'm here."

And his childhood fears, they surged through him. Couldn't help but think about when he'd pressed himself into Jimin's bruised, bloodied side, worrying his brother would never wake up again.

Couldn't help but think about how he'd woken up that next morning and realized the packet of oats was still in his pocket, and Jimin was limp in his arms, and his brother probably hadn't eaten the previous day and it was all Jihyun's fault and he should've just kept wandering the streets instead of going back home because then Jimin wouldn't have taken a beating and Jihyun wouldn't have

woken up to see his brother's eyes swollen shut with bruises, shirt shredded, ribs protruding and covered in more and more bruises and scratches and a puddle of dried blood on the faded sheets beneath him because then he was pulling the packet of oats out of his pocket and shaking Jimin's shoulder because Jimin was dead, he was dead and he hadn't eaten and it was Jihyun's fault and he couldn't stop crying and

"Is he alive?" Jihyun almost sobbed out. "Jungkook, is he dead? Is he dead? Did that monster kill him?"

Jungkook's eyes widened before he started shaking his head furiously, cursing under his breath, apologizing. "Shit, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, I didn't think that's what… yeah, yeah, he's alive. He just… I need your help. I need your advice."

Jihyun pulled a shuddering breath into his lungs, head spinning, black-light spots dancing in his vision as he released his iron grip on Jungkook's shoulders and took a step back. Relief, relief crashing through him, slamming through his entire body. Because after his unsettling dream, and then waking up and feeling like something was wrong, like he needed to check on Jimin…

Jihyun released the breath he'd been holding, blinking furiously as he sat on a nearby chair, cradling his head. And Jungkook was still apologizing, a hand on his shoulder because Jihyun couldn't stop thinking about how when he was little he'd started waking up every morning thinking his brother had died, and it'd gotten to the point where Jimin would purposefully wake up before him so that Jihyun didn't start freaking out.

"I'm sorry," Jihyun murmured. "I'm sorry… I just… It looked like something bad happened... and the only reason you'd be here is because something happened to Jiminie… and I thought…" Jihyun shook his head, swallowing hard, not able to finish.

Jungkook knelt next to him, and Jihyun looked up from where he sat, looking into Jungkook's soft, worried, exhausted gaze. And he knew Jungkook was a good person through and through. Knew those ridiculous accusations he caught wind of occasionally were anything but true; that much he'd known since Jimin had first spoken of him.

"I'm so sorry. He's not… he's definitely not…" Jungkook motioned with his hands, trailing off.

"Why are you here?" Jihyun asked with wary curiosity. "You said you needed advice?" Pink bloomed from the apples of Jungkook's cheeks, almost ducking his head from Jihyun's questioning gaze. "You could've just called if you wanted advice about Jiminie. You didn't have to come all the way down here."

Jungkook shrugged, the dark circles under his eyes like shadows. And he looked so shy all of the sudden, and Jihyun found himself heaving out another deep, calming breath before he was standing from his chair, Jungkook hesitantly standing as well.

"Do you want some tea?" Jihyun offered.

Jungkook nodded a little too enthusiastically, and Jihyun knew if his brother had been there he would've cooed. Would've pinched Jungkook's cheeks and made fun of him for being so shy. Because every time Jihyun had called to talk to Jimin through Jungkook's phone, that's all Jimin had talked about.

Jungkook is so cute.

Jungkook's bedhead stands up like 5 solid inches on its own. I just wanna run my hands through it

and pinch his cute little cheeks.

Jungkook is so shy when you compliment him.

Jungkook, Jungkook, Jungkook.

Jihyun had heard it all. Had heard everything Jimin had ever thought about GCF's maknae and more. He'd heard enough to be sick for a lifetime: like eating too much candy corn during halloween or too many of those cheap Easter chocolates that somehow showed up tenfold at your house every year.

So as Jihyun prepared the tea, he knew that the tapping sound at the little kitchen table was Jungkook fidgeting nervously, because that was another thing Jimin had constantly ranted about.

Jungkook can't sit still. It's so cute, Hyunie. So, so cute. He rocks from foot to foot and plays with his fingers and-

Jihyun scowled at Jimin's voice in his head, rolling his eyes as he poured tea into some mugs and turned to the table. Jungkook was indeed fidgeting, legs bouncing nervously from where he was sitting, bambi eyes wide as he stared at the window to his left. Only blinked when Jihyun sat across from him, setting the cups of tea on the table.

Jihyun sipped at his piping hot drink, watching as Jungkook grimaced while sipping at his own, smacking his lips at how bitter it was. "What's going on?"

Jungkook set down his cup of tea, steam wafting from the ceramic lip of the mug into the air. And he was quiet, lips pressed into a soft line, something far away and sad in his eyes. And Jihyun almost had half a mind to ask if Jimin really was alive, Jungkook looked so broken, so distraught. And when Jungkook finally spoke, his voice was so small, so… resigned.

Jihyun hadn't seen Jungkook since that day in the frozen yogurt shop, but this wasn't the man he remembered.

"I'm…" Jungkook ran his fingertip over his mug's handle. "I'm going to prison soon."

Jihyun's heart almost stopped, everything freezing in place as he blinked at Jungkook, trying to figure out what he could possibly mean by those words. Because Jungkook was innocent. He was innocent, so why would he be going to prison?

"The jury for my case… they'll start deciding my verdict today." Jungkook sighed, running a hand through his hair, the action so similar to what Jimin did that Jihyun had to blink a few more times to clear his brother from his head. "It could take a few hours, or it could take a few more months."

"You're innocent, though."

Jungkook just shrugged, ducking his head again, almost guilty. And Jihyun's heart was still stopped, and something sick, something eerie was constricting his chest.

"What's wrong? What… what's going on, Jungkook-ssi? Why are you here?" Jihyun asked, voice a trembling whisper.

Jungkook's hands were shaking, shaking so badly he nearly knocked his mug over trying to pick it up and take another sip of tea. And Jihyun just watched him, watched him struggle. Waited for Jungkook to explain, to tell him why he'd come all the way to Busan to ask for advice.

“I did something,” Jungkook sucked in a deep breath, Jihyun watching still, waiting. “I did something. I’m not proud of it. And I need… I need to tell somebody, and I need advice.”

Jihyun just listened, heart stuttering.

Jungkook was fidgeting with his fingers, his mug, the edge of the table. Legs bouncing up and down, eyes so big, so clouded with something like grief. Drenched in guilt. “I need to tell you a story.”

Jihyun sipped his tea, sat back in his chair, and braced himself for the words Jungkook was about to speak.

“It started almost three years ago in the GCF lobby with a cup of water…”

Jungkook knew Jin had threatened to gut anyone that bothered him, but he couldn’t wait anymore. He’d been pacing back and forth in his room for hours now, needing to ask Jin more.

Needed to find out more about how Jimin was doing, what had happened, if Jimin was happy and doing okay with work, if he was still listening to Mono in the mornings, if he was eating okay, if he was still having his nightmares, if he needed a glass of water to calm him down, if he

The door in front of him swung open, and Jungkook stopped where he’d been pacing in the hall outside Jin’s room. Saw the dark circles beneath his hyung’s red, puffy eyes. The exasperated sigh Jin let out was enough to make Jungkook feel a little sheepish.

“You’ve been pacing out here all day.”

“What?” Jungkook couldn’t meet Jin’s gaze. “I was just going to my room.”

Jin rolled his eyes, hands on his hips. “Yah! I told you guys if you bothered me I’d punch you.”

“You said you’d gut us.”

Jin huffed, clearly offended.

“And it’s almost time for bed, hyung. You’ve been sleeping all day.”

Jin’s eyes narrowed.

Jungkook’s eyes narrowed, too.

It was quiet, staring each other down. Jin glaring, Jungkook’s bambi eyes blank, unblinking.

Quiet.

Completely, utterly quiet.

So quiet Jungkook started going slightly cross eyed just to see if Jin would react.

Jin didn’t. He won that round. Jungkook was disappointed.

Jin made a face, head lolling back to sport a triple chin, nostrils flaring, cheeks puffing.

Jungkook bit back a cackle. He almost lost. Almost. But he didn’t, because he was the fucking

Golden Maknae, and he wouldn't let this old grandmother beat him. So he slowly raise his knee into the air, tucking his hands into his armpits, still keeping Jin's gaze.

Jungkook made a low clucking sound, hopping on one foot, flapping his wings in challenge.

Jin choked trying not to laugh. But he didn't, so the game was still on. And Jungkook watched, watched as Jin did the same thing, taking a chicken stance. Let out an even louder, more threatening cluck than Jungkook had.

And now, now Jungkook didn't feel like laughing. Because this was an all out challenge. And had Jin really just out-clucked him?

Jungkook clucked and crowed and hopped on one foot

Jin, Jin was doing the same thing and how fucking dare he

withholding information about his Jimin

being a stupid, selfish brat

not telling him

Cawing and clucking and crowing. A dance, fighting for dominance, seeing who would break first.

how *dare* he

coming back home like that, looking all sad

because Jimin was Jungkook's everything and he was so worried, worried sick

"What the hell are you two doing?"

Jin and Jungkook froze.

Slowly turned their heads to see Hoseok and Yoongi paused at the top of the stairs, disturbed.

"Mind your own business," Jin snapped before grabbing Jungkook and pulling him into the room, away from Yoongi's judging eyes.

"You did what?" *Jihyun breathed out, hands clenching into fists so tightly his knuckles were rattling, shaking with rage.*

"I filmed it."

Jihyun wished he was more like Jimin. Always had. Jimin was softer, kinder, more understanding. But where Jimin was a blooming sunflower, shifting with the sun, finding light, Jihyun was shade beneath the blooms. The earth keeping Jimin grounded, solid and unmoving.

Or, in other words, Jihyun's soul wasn't a patient one. Because he was up on his feet in a flash, gripping Jungkook's collar across the small tea table between them, knocking over his mug. Gripped Jungkook's collar in a vice-like grip, a distressed fury spreading like veins of tar through his body.

He'd always been told he had more of his father in him.

"You filmed it?" Jihyun raged.

Jungkook flinched a little, but didn't fight to pull away. Didn't try to escape or blabber excuses or cry. He was all guilt and anguish, summer brown eyes saturated with regret. "I did," Jungkook whispered.

All Jihyun could think of was Jimin's lopsided smile as a cruel hand pinned his throat to the wall, blood dribbling out of the corner of his mouth as he assured Jihyun everything would be okay.

"Why?" Jihyun cried, too much anger and confusion and outrage bombarding his senses. "Why would you do that?"

Jungkook's hands hovered above Jihyun's grip on his shirt, gently clasping around his fingers and slowly prying them off. "I'm not expecting forgiveness. All I can say is that I was hurt and lost and stuck in my own head. I was desperate for any evidence at all that Minwo was more suspect than me."

Jihyun's hands fell limply to his sides, still curled into loose fists. "So that's all he is to you? Evidence?"

Jungkook shook his head adamantly, eyes glittering with pain. Swallowed hard before glancing down at the table, the puddle of spilled tea. "Can we… can we sit and I'll try… I'll try to explain some more?"

Jihyun's eyes narrowed, but he nodded. Slowly lowered himself into his seat, picking up his now empty mug and setting it upright with a clack. Folded his arms over his chest, breathing a little too hard, still remembering the way Jimin had taken hit after hit for him that night so long ago.

It was silent for a little while as Jihyun's gaze remained riveted to the young man in front of him. The person his Jiminie-hyung had gushed about on and on for months. The person Jimin loved and trusted and cared about so much. The person that had filmed Jimin's abuse in order to use it for his own gain.

"The plan… my plan was to get a video of Minwo hurting Jimin and turn it into the police." Jihyun almost growled, but Jungkook continued. "But I couldn't. I turned my camera off as soon as… as soon as I snapped out of my shock."

"You filmed Jimin getting beaten up," Jihyun was shaking, shaking his head. "You fucking filmed it." Jihyun tried to pull in a breath, tried to calm himself down a little. "Do you know how much shit he's been through? I wasn't lying when I told you where me and him come from."

Jungkook was nodding immediately, those big doe eyes pleading for something. Maybe for Jihyun to believe whatever else he had to say. Maybe to calm down, to just listen. Either way, Jihyun's anger simmered down, blood still hot, but forcing himself to remember that Jimin expected better from him.

"Jimin's been through a lot," Jungkook murmured, keeping Jihyun's gaze. "And so have you."

Jihyun remained silent.

"He's told me…" Jungkook rubbed the back of his neck. "Well, he hasn't told me everything, but he's told me a lot." Shame, there was that shame again. "And I know what I did was wrong. It was more than wrong. It was… it was disgusting."

“Then why did you do it?”

There was that small, broken smile on his face again. The one that spoke of simmering coals where there had once been a raging fire. Given up, almost as if he’d given up on himself. “I did it because I was desperate. Because I didn’t want to go to prison for a crime I didn’t commit.”

“And you’re not desperate anymore?” Jihyun questioned. “What happened to the video?”

Jungkook shifted in his seat. “I hid it. I didn’t want to face what I’d done. But now…” Jungkook’s head hung, and he was picking at the edge of the table, and Jihyun’s heart softened a little more, the anger dying away. “I want to tell him.”

“Then why are you here telling me? Why not just tell him?”

“Because I love him.” Jihyun’s breath caught in his throat. “I’m in love *with him. And I think he’s running away from me. And I’m… I’m terrified. I’m terrified because I love him so much… I love him so much and I don’t deserve him but I just…”*

There were tears in Jungkook’s eyes, mouth a wobbly line, rubbing at his chest as though he could soothe the ache there. And Jihyun watched as his shoulders tensed, hands shaking as he scrubbed tears from his cheeks, frustrated.

“He deserves the world. He deserves someone that loves him unconditionally. Someone that loves him for who he is. Someone that will hold him and be there to kiss away his tears. Someone that will be able to be by his side for a long, long time. Someone that will take care of him and keep him safe and fill him with love.”

Jihyun struggled to find something to say, not knowing if he should point out the someone Jungkook was talking about. The someone that was sitting right in front of him.

“I want him to be happy,” Jungkook shook his head. “But I’m selfish, because I want to be the one to make him happy.”

“Why can’t you?”

“Because I’m going to prison soon. I won’t be able to be there for him. I’ll just hurt him more. And he’s been through… he’s been through enough hurt to last an entire lifetime.” Jungkook’s gaze finally locked with Jihyun, and Jimin’s younger brother felt goosebumps scatter over his skin at the ache in those eyes. “And I’m losing him.”

Jihyun’s brow creased, head tilting to the side. “What do you mean you’re losing him?”

More tears splashed down Jungkook’s face. “He got his own apartment. Moved out almost a week ago. I haven’t… I haven’t seen him since.”

“You think he’s running from you?” Jihyun asked, trying to process everything Jungkook had told him.

Jungkook nodded.

“Jungkook-ah, I’m only going to say this once.” Jihyun leaned forward, wanting Jungkook to really listen to what he had to say. And maybe Jungkook realized that, because the other 97-liner sat a bit straighter, stopped picking at the table, almost waiting with baited breath as Jihyun

looked him in the eye. “If Jimin was running, you wouldn’t be here asking me for advice.”

Jungkook’s brow furrowed, big eyes betraying his confusion.

Jihyun shoved away the memories that prickled at the back of his mind. “You wouldn’t be here with me. You would be retracing his last steps, last words, last moments over and over again, wracking your mind for where the hell he could’ve gone. You would be out there combing the streets, looking through homeless shelters, looking behind dumpsters… or in them. You’d be checking obituaries or police reports for unidentified bodies found. Because when Jimin runs away… when he runs away, he cuts all ties. He leaves as though he’d never existed in the first place. A ghost.”

Jungkook’s face had gone pale, eyes wide, body still for once. No fidgeting, no bouncing, no fiddling. Still, completely still. “What does… what are you saying?”

Jihyun sighed, folding his arms over his chest, wishing he hadn’t spilled his tea earlier. “I’m saying he’s not running from you. If he was running, you would know for sure.”

Jungkook clasped his hands in his lap, looking down as he seemed to be mulling over Jihyun’s words. Looked like his mind was spinning, like he was rethinking and recalculating and reassessing his entire life. Looked so lost, so confused that Jihyun couldn’t help but ask what else was going on.

The shame from earlier again colored Jungkook’s cheeks, and Jihyun braced himself for hearing something that would make him furious all over. But Jungkook’s shy, unsure words did anything but.

“I kissed him…” Jungkook was running a blunt nail over the lip of his mug, drowning in shame. “I mean, we… I mean, we kissed quite a few times… and I’m… I’m really in love with him. I love him. A lot.” Jungkook sucked in a heavy breath. “And I know it’s unfair of me to think he’d feel the same...”

Jihyun almost spoke up right then, all of Jimin’s gushed, rosy words stuck in his head.

“It’s unfair to love him so much and to… to want love in return after everything Minwo did to him.”

Oh. So that’s what this was about.

Jihyun frowned, eyes tracing the smooth lines of Jungkook’s face, painted over by late morning light. And as much as he’d been so angry earlier, so ready to condemn Jungkook and damn him to hell for what he’d done to his brother…

He couldn’t now, not at all.

Because Jungkook really loved Jimin. He could see that. Could see that it was a refined love that had been tended to like a fragile blossom. A love that’d started from flustered crush three years ago, a love that’d been beaten and bruised and trampled. A love that hadn’t quit; it had persevered, and it’d grown.

This was love in its purest form.

“Jimin loves you, too,” Jihyun murmured, watching as the crestfallen young man in front of him perked up a bit, startled and terrified.

“But he… he shouldn’t have to… he still has, he still has nightmares and he still won’t… the shit Minwo did to him… it’s only been 5 months.”

Jihyun nodded, thinking about his next words very carefully. “Did you know he never shuts up about you?”

If Jungkook’s face was flushed before, now it was on fire.

“He thinks you’re the entire world. It’s always ‘Jungkookie this’ and ‘Jungkookie that.’ I’ve never heard him talk about someone the way he talks about you.” Jihyun sighed again, shaking his head with a small smile on his face. “You make him so fucking happy, Jungkook-ssi…”

Tears, tears were running down Jungkook’s face and Jihyun knew this was what Jungkook was here for. Knew his next words had the power to shatter Jungkook into pieces. And it was more than frightening, knowing he could make or break this person.

“But something I learned about him… something I’ve always reminded myself of whenever he does something I don’t understand…” Jihyun’s hands were shaking, and there was a bird chirping outside the window, and the world was still moving around him. “He never decides these kind of things to hurt someone. It’s never with malicious intent, never to betray someone or… or abandon them.”

A warm drop of water splashed on Jihyun’s hand, and he realized he was crying.

“And you need to trust him.” That damn bird was singing a sweet little tune. “It’s hard. It’s hard to trust him.” There was something choking at Jihyun’s throat, making it hard to speak, to breathe, but he powered through. “It’s fucking hard, but in times like these, it’s all you can do.”

Jungkook didn’t say a word.

“You came to me for advice?” Jihyun asked, reaching across the table and gripping Jungkook’s wrist. “That’s my advice.”

A beat.

The bird still chirping outside.

A flapping of wings.

“Trust him.”

“Just tell me he’s okay,” Jungkook pleaded as Jin released his grip, making his way back to his bed. A bed that was still made, hadn’t been touched, hadn’t been slept in. So before Jin could even rebute, Jungkook motioned to his hyung’s bed, confused. “You didn’t sleep? Did I really keep you up?”

Jin glanced at his bed before sighing, sinking into the chair at his desk. Just looked at Jungkook, the dark circles beneath his red eyes speaking volumes. “No, Jungkook-ah,” Jin muttered, rubbing a palm into his eye as he yawned. “No, it wasn’t you. I was just joking when I said that.”

Jungkook relaxed a little at that, but not a lot. Knew there was only one reason why his hyung hadn’t slept yet. “Was it really that bad?”

Jin's brow rose, looking up at Jungkook from where he sat. "Bad?"

"Whatever happened with Jimin…"

Jin leaned back in the chair, bangs shifting over his eyes as he did so. "It's not bad… just… eye opening."

"Eye opening?"

A half-lidded, unimpressed stare. "What am I doing, writing an essay for you?"

Jungkook smiled sheepishly again, despite the heavy pit in his chest, aching to know if Jimin was alright. "I just want to know if he's alright."

"You just want to know if it's safe for you to go knocking on his door yet."

Jungkook was shaking his head, denying it, heart wrenching and twisting just a little harder. "No, hyung, I just-"

"You just need to go see him. What are you so afraid of?"

Everything.

"Nothing, just… I just…"

"What's holding you back from kissing the heck out of him?"

Jungkook was spluttering, grasping for words, for anything he could get his hands on.

"And why do you have to bug *me* about it? Why can't you go ask him?"

Jungkook was shaking his head, hating how Jin always made everything seem so simple. "He doesn't want me to see him. I know it."

Jin rolled his eyes a little. "And what are you? A psychic? Can you read minds?"

"I-"

"You can't, because if you could you'd hear a wailing, agonizing voices screaming 'STOP BEING A FUCKING IDIOT AND JUST TALK TO HIM.'"

Jungkook's excuses died in his throat, and he was just staring at his hyung, just staring and staring and staring.

"Listen, Jungkook-ah," Jin's playful anger gave way to his more sincere side once more. "I know you're taking Jihyun's words to heart, and I know you want to trust Jimin and blah blah blah. But he didn't tell you to stay away from Jimin. And I know Jimin… I know Jimin misses you a lot. And I think you two really just need to talk."

Jungkook blinked.

"JUST FUCKING TALK TO HIM."

Jungkook opened his mouth, finger raising in the air, about to point out how Jimin was staying away for a reason, and how he didn't want to hurt him. But Jin was already talking again.

“Yah, did I raise you to be a pansy? Do you think I spent so much money on food to make sure you would grow and get muscles even though you always throw me after you eat just to see you do this to yourself? No. I didn’t buy all that food or do all that laundry or clean all your shit to see it end like this. So go after him. Trust him all you want, but go talk to him.”

Jungkook’s nose scrunched. Because his heart was still so heavy, so hurt. And he *knew* Jimin was staying away for a reason. But shit, his hyung had a point. And Jihyun had never told him to stay away. Never told him to wait for Jimin to eventually meander his way back.

And Jungkook couldn’t justify it anymore. Couldn’t stay away. Because he needed to make things right, needed to fight for Jimin and be there for him and talk to him. Because if he and Jimin were to meet in the middle, he still had to take his steps to get there. He couldn’t wait for Jimin to get to the middle before starting his own trek there.

Jin was standing up, then. Thunder rumbling faintly outside, threatening to rain. Almost telling Jungkook not to go, not to do this, not now. “There you go. There’s my Jungkookie.”

Jungkook batted Jin’s hand away before he could ruffle his hair, already whipping away and dashing over to the door. Because he’d waited long enough. Long enough in the short time he had left, and he wasn’t going to waste another second of it.

“Yah, you make everything complicated, don’t you?”

Jungkook froze before he could close the door, already out in the hall once more.

“I love him.”

“Oh, and Jungkook-ssi?” Jihyun called just before he closed the door, Jungkook’s form already retreating down the hall.

Jungkook stopped and looked back at Jihyun.

“You need to tell him everything you told me. Trust goes both ways, you know? I don’t know how he’ll react… or if he’ll ever forgive you… but you need to tell him either way.”

Jungkook’s hands curled into loose fists, the two of them paused, unmoving. And then Jungkook offered a curt nod. And he walked away.

Chapter End Notes

> i'm sorry for worrying you all so much with my last note. i'm doing much better now, so don't worry. i probably overshare in these notes, but sometimes i feel like this is the only place i really have a voice, in a way? so thank you for listening and for caring. as for this chapter, i'm sorry if the story's getting scattered or confusing or... or the writing isn't as good or something idk haha this always happens when i (ugh another personal thing... sometimes i do wonder why i share so much haha) double my anti-deps. my mind gets a little wack for a month or two, so thank you for bearing with me.

thank you again for all the love and support. your comments and support mean the world to me.

lost my way

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Jimin-ah, he did that to you?”

Jimin ducked his head, words stuck in his throat. Because this was the part that hurt him the most every time-- the doubt. The denial. Because Jimin was just exaggerating, and it wasn’t as bad as he said. It wasn’t bad. It was all in his mind. He needed to grow up, stop pouting, *he’d pouted for long enough.*

“Jimin-ah, can I comment on this? If you want, I’ll just listen. I won’t say anything and I’ll let you keep telling me your story just like I have been. If you’re comfortable, though, can I tell you my thoughts on that?”

Jimin could already feel the shame lighting in his chest, could already feel the words that would soon seep into his skin and smother whatever confidence, whatever fire he’d built up. But this was Jin-hyung, and maybe Jimin was weak, but he would let Jin say what he wanted. Would let Jin tear apart his story and show Jimin all the ways he was wrong. So Jimin nodded, face flushed, hands shaking so hard in his lap he couldn’t hide it if he tried.

“Are you sure?”

Jimin nodded again.

“Jimin-ah, I want you to know that I believe you completely.”

Jimin’s head snapped up, eyes widening in shock. Because of course he shouldn’t be shocked. But he was. He was shocked, and he couldn’t think straight and did Jin really just say that?

“I believe every word you’ve said,” Jin confirmed. He paused for a moment, just holding Jimin’s startled gaze until it was cemented into Jimin’s mind that his hyung, his older brother really, actually *believed him. “I believe you, so I hope you believe me when I tell you that… what he did to you that night? That night and so many more? That wasn’t sex. That was rape.”*

“Rape?” Jimin breathed. “No, no… it was just… it was normal, right? It was what every couple does.”

But Jin was already gently shaking his head, ducking down into Jimin’s line of sight. “No, Jimin-ah. No, it’s not.” His words were so soft and caring and genuine, and Jimin was still expecting the slap of reality, still expecting Jin to laugh it off and say it was just a joke. That what Jimin had felt deep down for a while wasn’t what it was.

“Rape?” Jimin tested the word on his tongue.

“Jimin… can I hold your hands?”

Jimin realized only then that his hands were clenched so tightly into fists that the ring on his middle finger was bending, the soft, cheap metal warping above white knuckles. So Jimin forced his hands to relax, holding them out for Jin to take them.

“Is it okay if I ask a few more questions? Or do you want to move on?”

Jimin honestly had to pause, to think about it for a moment. Because there was a panic rising up in his chest, bruising up his mind, making it hard to think clearly. Because he'd never talked about this-- never. He'd never told anyone exactly what Minwo had done to him, and here was one of the kindest, most understanding hyungs he'd ever had, holding his hands and listening.

He wanted this. He wanted to talk. Wanted to finally pry all of these memories away from suffocating his heart. Jimin nodded. "You can ask."

Jin's eyes flicked between Jimin's for a moment before he continued, holding Jimin's hands just a little bit tighter. "Did he ever ask you permission before he did this stuff to you?"

Jimin slowly shook his head.

Jin let a few more moments tick by, just watching Jimin, making sure he was okay before he continued. "Did you ever tell him to stop?"

Jimin hesitated before nodding, ears ringing, face tingling as heat flooded his cheeks.

"You did?"

Jimin nodded again, words caught in his throat. Stuttered, trying to figure out what to say, palms getting clammy. "A lot. I told him… I told him to stop a lot."

Something like pain glimmered in Jin's deep brown eyes before he cleared his throat, waiting for a long time before he continued. And Jimin, that panic was swelling in his chest again, and he couldn't really breathe, and what if that somehow meant it wasn't rape?

"Did he stop?" Jin's voice was heavy, choked out. Cleared his throat again, blinking too fast, ears getting red like they did when he was upset.

Jimin shook his head.

"Jimin-ah, what…" Jin was gripping Jimin's hands, as if he was afraid of letting go now. "What are you feeling? Right now? I want you to talk, okay? I want you to tell me how you feel."

Jimin was quiet for a long time.

Because it had always been safer to say it had just been sex.

It was safer to say that maybe Minwo hadn't heard him screaming no, no, no. That being split apart and abandoned on soiled sheets hadn't torn him up inside. That he'd screamed the first few times, but had gone silent after that, resigned because it was normal; it was what normal couples did, and Jimin was just not smart enough to see it that way yet.

It was safer to pretend it wasn't what it was.

"I feel… overwhelmed." Jimin licked his lips, huffing a little breath in and out-- all he could manage. "Not because I'd never thought it was rape… but because he taught me not to call it that…"

Jin nodded, just listening.

"He would do these… he would do these horrible things to me… he would do them and then make me feel bad for thinking it was bad… made me feel like it was my fault, like I… like I owed him sex for everything he did for me… for letting me live with him or buying me food or clothes… "

Jimin couldn't bare to meet Jin's gaze anymore, so he stared at their entwined hands instead.

"It wasn't your fault," Jin murmured softly. "You didn't owe him anything. You don't *owe him anything. No matter what he told you at the time, that's not how sex works. Sex isn't about guilt. That's not… Jimin-ah, that's not sex."*

"Hyung…" Jimin was embarrassed, but he wanted to ask. "What is… what is it, then?" Jimin was expecting his silly, goofy hyung to come back, but Jin's face remained serious. No jokes, no laughing. Gazed earnestly at Jimin as he thought.

"What is it?" Jin squeezed Jimin's hands to assure him as Jimin almost started squirming with how shy he was, asking such an intimate question. "Have you never…" Jin paused, as if he was trying to phrase his next words carefully. "Had you never had sex before Minwo?"

Jimin felt ashamed, thinking about when he and Minwo had first met. How easy it'd been for Jimin to give in, let Minwo take what he wanted all because of a few pretty words.

~~"Are you lost?"~~

~~Jimin whipped around, hand clutching at his chest, heart almost spasming in his chest at the sudden voice. "Sorry, sorry. I just… was looking for the bathroom."~~

~~The man, who Jimin now realized was wearing an impeccably sharp dress shirt and slacks, was one of the most handsome men he'd ever seen. Dark brow raised in amusement, black eyes glittering with interest. Was taller and broader than Jimin, with muscle bulging through the white material of his shirt as he crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the doorway. "There's a bathroom on every floor."~~

~~Jimin nodded quickly, giving the man a bow. "Ah… yes, I'm sorry, sir."~~

~~But the man didn't leave, didn't try to direct him to where the bathroom was. Instead looked Jimin up and down, something predatory sparkling in his gaze, something dark. Made the hairs on the back of Jimin's neck stand up.~~

~~"Can I help you, sir?"~~

~~The man pushed off from where he'd been leaning against the doorframe, stepping into the room. And Jimin shivered, because there was something charged in the air between them, something electric. And he was scared, terrified of how hard his heart started beating. Didn't know why he wasn't taking a step back as the man closed the door, locking it behind him.~~

~~"I think I can help you," he supplied, pacing a little closer to Jimin.~~

~~Jimin swallowed hard, eyes flicking between the man and the door. "Help me?"~~

~~"You're lost, right?"~~

~~Jimin nodded dumbly. Wouldn't deny he found this strong, intimidating, dark man terrifyingly attractive.~~

~~The man took another few steps closer until Jimin had to tilt his head up to meet his gaze. And the man's hands were settled loosely on his hips, fingertips grazing his waist, the air hot, stifling. And the man leaned down, the grip on his hips a little stronger than before as he whispered, "what's your name," like a secret to be shared only between them.~~

~~*“Jimin,” he whispered through a shuddered breath.*~~

~~*“Jimin,” a low voice tickled the shell of his ear, sending shivers down his spine. “Pretty name for a pretty boy.”*~~

~~*Jimin wasn’t used to men coming onto him. Didn’t really date unless Hoseok set him up with someone, and even then it was always shyness and awkward flirting and him never wanting to go on another date again; a part of him didn’t want to find anybody, because then he would become his parents.*~~

~~*“Pretty?” Jimin asked, cheeks going hot.*~~

~~*The man pulled back, a little smirk tugging at his lips. “No one’s ever called you pretty before?”*~~

~~*Jimin blushed even harder. Because no one had, unless you counted Hoseok teasingly pinching his cheeks as he cooed about what a pretty baby his little Jiminie was.*~~

~~*“Ah, so cute,” the man murmured.*~~

~~*Jimin looked down at where their hips were almost meeting. “And what’s your name?”*~~

“Jimin-ah?”

Jimin’s eyes snapped up to Jin’s, shame flowing hot through his blood.

“It’s nothing to feel bad about. It’s okay to tell me anything. I won’t judge you, okay?”

Long pause, slashed breaths, no more tears. A tiny nod. That’s all Jimin could offer. Because he knew that, knew Jin wouldn’t judge him. “He was my first.”

Jin didn’t hesitate before nodding, accepting what Jimin had said. Sat back in his chair, not leaning so far forward. Still held Jimin’s hands, though not as tightly. “You want to know what sex should be like?”

Jimin nodded again.

Jin sighed, obviously thinking long and hard about what he should say. “It should be freedom,” he said after a little while. “It should be whatever you and your partner are okay with. It’s… it’s consenting, okay? You should be able to talk to your partner about what’s okay and what’s not okay. Sex isn’t one sided. It isn’t guilt, it isn’t terror, it isn’t a punishment… unless you’re into that… but, I mean even then it’s consensual. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

Jimin soaked up those words, sorted through them in his head, tried to match them up to what he knew, what he’d experienced. Ran through it again and again in his head, trying his best to commit them to memory. Compared it to the relationships he’d seen growing up, like his parents or his foster homes.

None had been… good. Even living with Hoseok, Ms. Jung had been a single parent. And though it wasn’t really an excuse for being so naive, it had played a big part in how he let Minwo tell him their relationship had been normal. He realized that now.

“Is that what it’s like for you?” Jimin asked quietly, knowing maybe he was definitely stepping over his boundaries… but he was curious.

Jin’s ears were chilli red, the apples of his cheeks slowly flushing as well. “Ah… yes.” Jin

coughed a little. “But my, uh, partner… I haven’t been able to talk to him since Jungkook’s case started.”

For a moment, Jimin forgot what they were sitting here for. Forgot it was about telling his own story, because he wanted to know so badly. Because why would Jungkook’s case stop Jin from seeing his partner?

“Don’t give me that look,” Jin huffed, suddenly defensive. “I’m not telling you anything, not in a million years.”

Jimin would feel bad, except he could see the light in his hyung’s eyes, could hear the humorous notes in his voice. “Then what is he like? And I thought… I thought you weren’t into guys?”

Jin sighed, slapping Jimin’s thigh lightly. “Brat,” he muttered pettily, but his eyes were soft and sad. “I’m not… unless it’s him. And I’m not going to let labels tell me I shouldn’t hold him or kiss his cute dimples or fall in love with how clumsy he is just because I’m not gay.”

Warmth spread through Jimin’s chest, because Jin was obviously in love. Very in love, eyes full of it, heart melting right in front of Jimin. But there was also a heartache there, and Jimin knew this was another thing Jin had kept hidden, always pretending to be the happy hyung with no problems.

“Why can’t you talk to him?” Jimin asked carefully. “I mean, you don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to.”

Jin brushed his fingers through his bangs, smoothing his fringe to the side as his lips parted, exhaling lightly. Looked down at the plastic table, scratching a fingernail over the bumpy surface. “I don’t know. He just… stays away from me, and I don’t know why. Something’s wrong, something he’s not telling me, but he’s blocked my number and… I don’t know. The last thing he told me was not to worry… and that he loved me.”

Jimin was full of sadness for his hyung, and he wanted to help, wanted to say something that would make Jin feel better… But how could Jimin give Jin advice when he himself had done the very same thing to almost every person in his life so far? Left them without another word, with only hurt and confusion to fill them up. Was doing it now to Jungkook, using his attempts to go to the police as his excuse to stay away, try not to hurt the person he loved even more than he already had.

“I’m sorry, hyung,” Jimin whispered, wishing he could help. Jimin licked his lips, Jungkook’s kind smile flashing through his mind, his heart aching that much more. “I wish I could help you and give you advice like you’ve done for me. But I can’t because I… I do the very same thing as your partner did.”

“That’s okay,” Jin said with a soft smile. “We all run at some point. It’s just a matter of what we’re running from. Or who.”

A song shivered through the air, tearing at the silence. Ripped the emptiness of the room apart, echoing with sound, with a beat that pulsed through Jimin’s blood.

Jimin’s eyes flared, shattered hazel in the dimmed lights of the dance studio. And he let everything overwhelm him, take him under. Let the music wrap him up, guide his limbs, tug him like a puppet dancing on strings. Let his body move how it wanted.

Because he'd been doing a lot of thinking. And he'd come to the conclusion that he wanted to see Jungkook again. Didn't want to face going to the police alone, didn't want to shoulder such a heavy burden in solitude as he'd always done. And not only that, he wanted to tell Jungkook everything, too.

But he was fighting himself still.

So he was dancing, trying to burn his body up, even though he didn't have much left to burn after 2 hours of sleep and a full day of work. But he danced anyways, danced until the rage, the fear, the doubt in himself shivered from his skin. Until he was clay ready to be molded and mended and shaped.

Danced and danced, late into the night, thunder and lightning blooming through the sky outside. Danced until he couldn't anymore, because only then would he be able to do what he needed to do.

And so when there was sweat drenching his shirt and a burn kneaded deep into his limbs, he finally turned the music off. Turned the music off and packed his things into his bag, changing from his sweat-soaked shirt into a spare he'd brought.

Footsteps heavy as he made his way to the door, flicking the lightswitch, the steady hum of electricity cutting off as the large room was swathed in darkness.

And he left, walking towards Jungkook's house as rain sprinkled lightly from the clouds.

Thunder thrummed in the sky, lightning cracking out blue flashes, making the dark clouds above him glow. And Jungkook almost regretted not bringing an umbrella, rain beginning to patter across his windshield, promising a downpour with the musky storm scent filling his lungs.

And he was terrified, nerves edging up his spine, neck ice cold with sweat. Closer, getting closer to Jimin's new apartment. Heart thumping harder and harder, almost pounding along with the thunder.

Because telling Jimin about the USB, about the video… it would hurt him, hurt him a lot. And Jungkook could only pray to whatever god may or may not be out there that Jimin didn't end up despising him.

He could lose everything he had with Jimin. But that was okay. He was going to have to be okay with it, because Jungkook had fucked up big time, and he'd had long enough to tell Jimin what he'd done. It didn't matter if he loved Jimin, didn't matter at all because if Jimin was hurt in the end, if Jimin had to live through the pain he'd endured for 2 years all because of Jungkook's fucking pride…

He was going to have to be okay with it.

But that didn't mean his hands weren't shaking as he gripped the steering wheel, the rain now pouring. Didn't mean he wasn't terrified of this impending heartbreak. Didn't mean he didn't dread the moment Jimin would open the door and Jungkook would have to tell him everything.

But he had to do this, so he would do it.

He didn't want to go to prison knowing he hadn't told Jimin. Didn't want Jimin to stumble across it on his own while Jungkook was locked up, unable to explain, to apologize. Didn't want Jimin to

go through all of that pain alone, not anymore.

But as he was turning the corner, his phone started ringing.

He ignored it, wanting to focus on his task at hand.

His phone rang again.

And again.

And again.

So he finally picked up as he parked his car in front of Jimin's apartment, rain pouring from the heavens, little rivers rushing the sides of the road. Didn't check the caller ID, just answered it. Mind spinning and whirring and tumbling with anxiety and worry and gut-wrenching nerves, seeing the single light on in Jimin's window.

"Hello?"

"I'm sorry."

Jungkook blinked, brow furrowing as he thumbed at his steering wheel, pressing the phone harder into his ear. "Hayoon?"

"Jungkook-ah, I'm so sorry."

"Hayoon? Why are you sorry? What's wrong? What happened?" There was a trembling silence, short breaths rattling through the speaker into Jungkook's ear. "Hayoon?"

"I gave Jimin the USB."

Jungkook couldn't breathe, eyes so wide they hurt, mouth dropped open as horror pulsed through his blood.

"I couldn't… I couldn't… he needed… he needed to know, and he needed to make his own decision with what to do with it."

Jungkook still couldn't speak.

"I love you, Jungkook. You're my best friend." There was a pause, the unmistakable sound of a sob. "But it's not your choice, and it's not mine. It's not anyone's choice but his, and… there's… there's something I need to tell you, if you'll let me."

Jungkook was frozen, completely frozen, muscles locked up.

"But not over the phone. I'll tell you… I'll tell you when I see you again. If you'll ever want to see me again…"

Silence.

"I'm so sorry."

And then Hayoon hung up, and Jungkook was rigid in his seat, phone still pressed to his ear. And it was quiet except for the downpour of rain, so quiet as Hayoon's words rang through his head.

And then Jungkook was fumbling with his seatbelt, chucking his phone into the passenger seat as

he flung the car door open, slamming it behind him as he dashed across the street. Drenched in an instant by the rain, thunder cracking mightily over his head, everything dark, so dark except for that single light.

And he was dashing up the steps to Jimin's door, running as fast as he had the night he'd taken that damn video.

Because Jimin had seen it. He'd seen it, and he was going to be so hurt, and Jungkook hadn't been there to explain, to ease him through it. Had let Jimin suffer through it on his own, or maybe that's why Jin-

That's what had been wrong.

That's why Jin had been so exhausted, so weary and sad.

Because Jimin had seen the video, and he had been completely alone through all of it.

Jimin was hurting, hurting because of Jungkook.

And Jungkook was pounding on the apartment door, freezing water soaking through his jacket to his skin, his bangs guiding water into his eyes. Cold, bone cold. Panicked. Pounding so hard his hand hurt, red and numb.

"Hyung!" Jungkook cried. "Jimin! Please, please let me explain!"

No answer.

"Jimin, please! I'm sorry! I'm so sorry!"

Nothing.

"Jimin, tell me you're okay! Please!"

Storm raging harder, swirling around him, beating him with rain and guilt and horror. Because it was late at night, and Jimin should be home, and he wasn't answering the door because he hated Jungkook. But maybe, maybe not. Maybe he was asleep, even though he was a night owl, always having trouble going to sleep before midnight. Maybe he was listening to music? Maybe, maybe he was *hurt* because of *Jungkook* and he had to make this right.

"Please, Jimin! Please!"

And all he could imagine was Jimin shaking like he did when he got nightmares, face sheet white as he clawed at anything he could get his hands on. Little whimpers caught in his throat as he pleaded with the person in his dreams not to hurt him, to stop, to *not touch him there.*

and Jungkook had brought all that back

he'd hurt

he'd hurt he'd he'd hurt Jimin

all his fault hurt Jimin was hurt and Jungkook needed to apologize

needed Jimin to understand how sorry he was

"Please," Jungkook gasped, forehead pressed against the cold door, rain dripping from his nose as

he braced a hand against the surface, a terrible sob breaking him apart. “Jimin, I’m sorry.”

hurt Jimin was hurt he was hurt

was he going to be okay

was he okay what had Jungkook done why hadn’t he told Jimin sooner

he could’ve he could’ve

“I’m sorry.”

Nothing but that single light on in the window, his entire world crumbling around him once more, and the pouring rain.

And he’d lost Jimin before he’d even had the chance to find him again. He’d lost him, and so he sank down onto the porch step, not caring that it was only raining harder, that he was so, so cold. Just sat there, head in his hands as he cried, chest squeezing, lungs constricting with silent cries that brutally slammed through his body.

He was lost.

Chapter End Notes

so... another cliffhanger? haha oops. feelings? thoughts? i try to handle sensitive subjects such as the ones in the flashback carefully, so if you think i've written it... idk, poorly? or not acurately... i'm sorry. it's just what i know, along with the research i've done.
as always, thank you so much for reading, commenting, and kudos. i love you guys so much, and you give me confidence in my writing.
you can follow me on tumblr @idreaminmono if you ever need to talk to me.

ps. sorry they're still not together. the next chapter is gonna be killer long... so, yeah. (this one was still 15 pages tho haha)

the fairy and the monster

Jimin dragged his numb feet through the snow, heavy, wet snowflakes melting against his stinging cheeks as he rubbed at his burning eyes. Because it was so cold, only wearing the fluffy blue jacket and shorts, the long socks not thick enough to even attempt at keeping his legs warm.

Cold, felt like his hands were frosting over as he desperately rubbed them together, trying to keep them from freezing. Was so focused on the frigid cold that he didn't realize he'd passed a few more blocks without paying attention to where he was going.

He cursed, fumbling for his little black flip phone, opening it up and squinting at the little square of brightness. Brushed a few droplets of water away, trying to shield the phone from the snow with a trembling, red hand.

He read the address Jungkook had texted to him again and again, trying to find out where he was as he looked around, disoriented. Cold, so fucking cold. Ice, felt like ice was spreading sluggishly through his body, cracking through his veins, fogging his head.

When he finally caught sight of a street sign through the whorls of snow, he realized he'd passed Jungkook's street a while back.

He almost collapsed right there in the snow, ready to just sit, sit and sleep and not take another step. Was starting to feel oddly warm, sleepy. Felt like maybe if he just kept wandering forward he would get to where he needed to go, no problem.

No, no. Couldn't, couldn't think like that. Too cold, cold not warm. Wasn't warm. But then, why was he taking his jacket off? Because he was sweating, sweating bullets, he was sure of it. Felt as though he was burning up.

"Hey, you okay?"

Jimin blinked up at the person in front of him, trying to determine whether they were real or not. And why were they wearing a coat? Because it was unbearably hot and Jimin *had* to take off his jacket.

"Why are you taking off your jacket? You're shivering."

The stranger's hands were on his own, then. Prying them away from pulling his jacket off. Heard a mumbled curse under the man's breath about how cold "they" were.

"Who are you?" Jimin asked.

The man shrugged, simply wrapping a hand over Jimin's shoulders, turning him around. "You're going to Jungkook's house, right?"

Jimin nodded dumbly, still itching to take his jacket off. And with the man's arm around him, he felt even hotter. "Who are you?" He asked again, because he honestly couldn't remember if he'd asked yet.

The man smiled from beneath his hood, and Jimin was thinking maybe he should be more wary of random men leading him somewhere so late at night in a snowstorm… but those dimples. They were so cute, so innocent. Smile so bright, so comforting, so… sad? Hurting? Guilty?

~~“I’m a monster,” the man said, voice trembling as they continued back down the road, retracing Jimin’s smeared footprints in the snow.~~

~~“Monster?” Jimin asked, though no danger prickled though him, not even a little bit.~~

~~“But I’m here to help you,” the man assured anyways.~~

~~Jimin didn’t think about that, just kept walking wherever this man was leading. Was starting to feel colder for some reason, body not as hot anymore. Didn’t feel like taking off his clothes, but was still confused as to what was happening. Where he was even wanting to go in the first place.~~

~~“Where did you come from?” Jimin asked, the white world swaying around him, spinning too slowly, as if the snow was cotton and Jimin was meant to reach out and pluck it from the air, spin it into wool.~~

~~The monster smiled; dimples. And Jimin still couldn’t see his face, but he saw the mouth, saw those dimples, and thought maybe if he reached out a little more, he could poke them.~~

~~“Hey, hey, hands to yourself,” the monster laughed, large, warm hand curling loosely around Jimin’s.~~

~~“You have cute dimples,” Jimin pointed out, pouting a little at the fact that he didn’t get to touch them.~~

~~The monster laughed again, a loud, boyish laugh that Jimin immediately copied, just to try the sound out in his own throat. “You’re like a fairy,” the monster said instead, booping Jimin’s nose, still holding Jimin’s hand.~~

~~Jimin nodded a little, as if that was a reasonable answer to whatever question had… or had not… been in his mind.~~

~~They continued walking for a while longer, the fairy and the monster. And Jimin only realized he was freezing once they got to some porch steps. And the monster was letting him go, urging him to climb those steps, to knock. And Jimin, Jimin was finally coming back to himself.~~

~~“Are you real?” Jimin asked.~~

~~Those dimples again; the monster laughed, quietly this time. “You need to get inside. You’re cold, and you’re covered in bruises.”~~

~~Jimin turned towards the house in front of him. Looked up at the door, wondering if Jungkook would even let him in. But when he turned back to ask the monster what he thought, he found nothing, footprints already covered in snow.~~

~~Jimin sighed, rubbing pathetically at his arms, thinking that maybe he was going insane. But regardless, he took a deep breath, shivering harder and harder as he climbed towards that door one step at a time; pink and blue and white.~~

~~And he knocked.~~

-

~~Namjoon watched, hidden in the storm, as Jimin was taken in by Jungkook. And with a heaviness~~

~~in his heart, he turned away from the light of the house, shoving his hands deep in his pockets as the dimples disappeared.~~

~~And the monster made his way back to where his master was calling.~~

obsidian and onyx

Chapter Notes

WAIT!!
Have you read the NEW chapter 41??
It's NO LONGER an author's note!
You HAVE to read it for VITAL INFO about the rest of the story!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mood: Arcade by Duncan Laurence

Jimin was soaked by the time he got to Jungkook's house, the rain having started to downpour about five minutes before he got to the right street. And so he jogged the rest of the way, hood over his head, though it didn't do much. And before he could think about it, before his thoughts could get to him, he was already knocking on the door.

The door opened after a moment, and Taehyung was staring back at him with wide eyes. And for a second, Jimin almost thought they were just going to keep standing there, frozen. Staring at each other, Jimin shifting awkwardly, wondering what Tae was doing.

But then Tae was barrelling into him, pulling him into a crushing embrace. Holding him as if they hadn't seen each other in years. Picked him up and lifted him off the front step into the house, shutting the door and just squeezing him.

Jimin wheezed, his ribs creaking with the force of the embrace, feeling like he was never going to breathe again. "TaeTae," Jimin coughed, patting Tae's shoulder, tapping out. "Can't breathe."

Tae released Jimin, gently setting him down so his feet could touch the floor once more, holding him at arm's length. Grinning, just grinning. "Jimin-ah!"

Jimin found himself smiling despite the heavy weight on his shoulders, Tae's bright aura always sure to make him feel warm and loved. Always made him feel a little less weary, a little less troubled with the world. "Taehyung-ssi," Jimin greeted.

Tae grinned and grinned and grinned, showing all his teeth, eyes squinted closed as he hugged Jimin again. "I missed you."

Jimin swallowed hard, guilt prickling along the back of his neck as he returned the other 95'ers hug. Because he'd missed Taehyung a lot, too, and he shouldn't feel so happy, so relieved that Tae hadn't forgotten about him. That Jin had told the truth, that he was actually missed while he'd been away.

"It's only been a week or two."

"Two weeks," Tae pouted, pulling back again to look Jimin in the eye. "And you're completely drenched. You chose to come back home in a rainstorm."

Home.

Jimin didn't think Taehyung had even given that word a second thought. But it hit Jimin, hit him so hard his lungs refused to work, his chest squeezing and aching and pounding with a startling realization that shoved its way through him.

Because as he looked around, eyes flitting from the couch he'd once slept on months ago to his own paintings hanging above the dining room table, and then to the person standing in front of him: this, this was home. Not his lonely apartment with its empty walls and silent nights. Sure, it was his house where he had chosen to live, and he'd worked damn hard to earn it…

But it wasn't home.

Home was having breakfast with a dead-inside Yoongi peering at him over the lip of his coffee mug, sleepy and grumpy, but all soft and squishy looking as Agust D played in the background. (Yoongi always smiled more when Jimin played his songs, and it was a self-satisfied smile that made it worth listening to heavy rap so early.)

Home was cuddling into Jin's side as they watched Titanic for the hundredth time, reenacting a new scene that was guaranteed to make everyone else in the room roll their eyes, but leaving Jimin laughing so hard he practically flung himself into Jin's side.

Home was the pungent smell of acrylics, colors splotched over his fingertips, stained into his forearms as he painted with Taehyung in a comfortable, concentrated silence. Listening to Taehyung's light, child-like laugh as Jimin teased him for poking his tongue out in concentration once again (looking like a big, tan puppy.)

And home, home was waking up next to a fluffy mop of brown hair and mumbled nothings as Jungkook turned in his sleep, hogging the yellow blanket to himself and leaving Jimin grinning as goosebumps erupted over his skin. Because he loved Jungkook.

Home was pressing little kisses to Jungkook's squishy cheeks as he slumbered late at night, beautiful doe eyes fluttering as Jimin gave him a few kisses too many, just because he could. Watching his chest gently rise and fall with soft, exhaled breaths, Jimin pressing his ear right above Jungkook's heart to hear that low, thumping pulse. Because he loved Jungkook.

Home was Jungkook draping himself around Jimin from behind, chin heavy on Jimin's shoulder as the maknae rocked them back and forth to a soft, lilting song through the oranges of a late afternoon. Feeling safe, at peace, whole. Because he loved Jungkook.

Home was Jin and Tae and Yoongi, yes, but it was always Jungkook, too.

And maybe that's why his heart had hurt so much when he'd left. Because this was home, and he hadn't realized just how much he'd missed it until he'd come back.

"Jimin?"

Jimin blinked, a small, watery smile tugging at his lips as his eyes burned. "Sorry Taehyung-ssi. I've just missed you so much, too."

Tae reached up, cupping Jimin's cheek and swiping a thumb below his eye, catching a tear. "I'm sorry for not visiting you yet. We weren't sure if you… we weren't sure if we should visit because, you know, you'd just moved in and you needed time to… ah, but that wasn't right, was it? Also," Tae bit his lip, looking a little sheepish. "Neither me nor Yoongi-hyung actually know where you live, and Jin-hyung was really grumpy about getting some sleep when he came home this morning, so we couldn't exactly ask him or I would've… I would've gone to visit you today."

Jimin was smiling so hard his cheeks hurt, hand pressed over Tae's, holding the larger, tanner hand against his face. "I love you, Taehyungie."

Tae grinned, leaning forward and touching their foreheads together, grinning that square grin. "I'll come to visit every day, okay?"

Jimin knocked their heads together a little, giggling. "Every single day?"

Tae nodded against Jimin's bangs. "I see your point. I'll have to move in, won't I?"

Jimin giggled harder, pulling back and ruffling Tae's hair. "I have nowhere for you to sleep."

"Well…" Tae actually looked a little troubled at that, a little lost. "Where do *you* sleep?"

"On a mattress."

Tae's grin returned. "Then we'll have to share that."

"But it's only a twin size," Jimin pointed out.

Tae shrugged, almost bursting with sunlight and laughter. "It'll be more cozy that way."

"For you maybe," Jimin grumbled, huffing. "You sleep like a starfish, and you drool everywhere."

Tae actually looked offended. "I fell asleep in between you and Jungkookie one time and you're going to hold it against me for the rest of our lives."

Jimin refused to let his heart stop at the mention of Jungkook's name. "We had to move to your bed because I had no space and you kicked Jungkook off on the other side."

Tae scratched the back of his neck, looking a little shy, now. "So I can't move in?"

Jimin laughed, shaking his head. "You'd be sad if you moved out. *I'm* sad I moved out," Jimin tried with a laugh, though it fell a little flat.

"Then move back in," the other 95'er suggested without batting a lash.

Jimin's breath hitched at how easily Taehyung had suggested it. Didn't look like he was joking, looked dead serious. And Jimin knew he meant it, knew Tae didn't fool around like that. And Jimin actually considered it, actually thought about what it'd be like to move back, to come home.

"I can't break my lease," Jimin said instead, though this new thought, this new idea had already planted itself firmly in Jimin's head. Tae drooped a little at Jimin's words, and Jimin patted his neck. "It's okay, Taehyungie. I'll visit a lot, too."

Taehyung nodded, still a little sulky, but tried to offer a smile. "You're not just here for me, are you?"

Jimin blinked in surprise at Tae's sudden question. Cursed at the other 95'ers uniquely random mind that saw through complicated things as if they were made of glass, but couldn't for the life of him look at something simply.

"He left a few minutes ago," Tae continued with a small, knowing smile on his face.

Jimin's heart dropped a little at that, knowing they'd just barely missed each other. "Do you know when he'll be back?"

Something suddenly seemed to don in Tae's mind, because his eyes were going wide, his mouth falling open in a little 'oh.' He pulled his phone out of his pocket, checking for something before he glanced up at Jimin beneath his lashes, bashful, embarrassed. "He… aish," Tae rubbed the back of his neck. "He actually went to see you."

Jimin's mind blanked

couldn't, couldn't think, think about what those words meant

that jungkook was gone, was gone right now to see *him*

"He's," Jimin sucked in a breath, watching Taehyung carefully. "He's gone… he went… he went to see me?"

Tae nodded, biting his lip. "I forgot."

Jimin didn't know whether, whether, whether it was good, good or bad. Jungkook had gone, gone to see him. And Jimin, Jimin had gone to see Jungkook. And it was scary, so scary that Jungkook needed to talk to Jimin, and Jimin needed to talk to Jungkook, and he didn't know what it meant.

"Why do you look scared?" Tae asked, lip jutting out in a worried pout. Tapped under Jimin's chin affectionately. Looked like he want to crush Jimin in another rib-splintering embrace.

"Could you call him?" Jimin dodged Tae's question, heart in his throat.

Tae nodded, already pulling Jungkook's contact up. "What do you want me to tell him?"

Jimin thought about it for a moment, thought what would be best. "Tell him," Jimin sighed, clutching at his backpack strap. "Tell him to stay at my apartment. I'll be right there… and that I need to talk to him, too."

Tae hesitated pressing dial, motioning to the phone in his hand. "Do you want to talk to him instead?"

Jimin's heart beat a little faster, the blood roaring through his ears getting a bit louder. "No," Jimin muttered. "You should just… just tell him I'll be there soon."

Tae finally tapped dial, pressing the phone to his ear, and Jimin tried, tried not to listen to the barely audible ringing tone. To the tiniest sound of Tae's deep breath, the ticking of a clock somewhere in the kitchen. Silence pressing in on all sides, clawing, clawing at him.

"He's not answering," Tae said with a small frown, trying to call again.

After the second time, Jimin just shook his head. "Maybe his phone's on silent… just text him for me, then?" Tae didn't say anything, but Jimin saw him typing out a text, tongue sticking out a little in concentration as his blunt nails tapped at the phone screen.

When Jimin saw Tae send the text, he held his breath, glancing at the door behind him. And Taehyung finally hugged him, crushing Jimin against his chest, worry potent, stinging Jimin's eyes.

"I'm glad you came back." Jimin felt the low vibration of Tae's voice with his cheek pressed against the other 95'ers chest. Could hear the sadness, the smile. "And I'm glad you're going to work everything out." A pause, Tae's chest expanding with a big breath. "You are, right?"

Jimin sighed, eyes shut tight, fingers curling in the warm material of Tae's shirt. "It's about time, isn't it?"

They held each other for a long time, and Jimin was grateful for Taehyung. Because at first Tae had been a little distant, a little wary, a little quiet. Still was at times. But once Jimin had broken through his walls, Taehyung had become all hugs. And Jimin was grateful for Tae's hugs, and for his unconditional love.

So Jimin let go of Taehyung reluctantly, wishing to hug his soulmate always. But the man he loved had just gone to find him, and Jimin would be there this time. Wasn't going to run; he was going to *find.*

Taehyung held Jimin's shoulders and smiled, smiled that beautiful smile only Taehyung could wear. A little sad, a little scarred deep down, but healed. Healed and loving and bright, a bright star. "Do you want me to drive you?"

Jimin shook his head. "I'll walk. It's not too far… and I need a little more time to think."

Tae nodded once, a simple dip of his chin. "Then I'll go get you my umbrella. And if he comes home I'll send him back to you."

Jimin was grateful for Taehyung.

~~Jungkook was dreaming.~~

~~Still awake. Awake, but not.~~

~~Dreaming. Dreaming, but not.~~

~~Stuck, finally stuck, finally caught in the in-betweens that had haunted him so frequently these past few months. Burning, burning - alight with should've-beens, crushed under what-ifs. Dreaming, dreaming of blue and white and pink.~~

~~Same dream that'd plagued him too often. Returned, returned and it was that damn porch. Fuzzy jacket and ghostly snow and pastel pink hair.~~

~~A door.~~

~~Except this wasn't a dream, was it? Different time, different world, different porch. Same not-dream.~~

~~Never opened, never opened the door.~~

~~Jimin had disappeared, never to be found again.~~

~~And Jungkook's timeline was pinned to cement steps. Crushed, crushed up pearl scattered beneath his feet. Shredded gold falling apart at his touch. Ruby shattering, slitting his fingers open as he scrambled to pick up his pieces.~~

~~Drowning in rain, dreams drowning in rain. Alone, he was alone, and where did his timeline go? Where had his plot broken? His next chapter, next page, next paragraph: where had they gone?~~

~~Snow, where was the snow and why did it turn to rain? Melted, yes, but still ice cold.~~

~~And the bird, when did it flee? From these cement steps, did it leave? Learn to stitch the bearing of its wings to the beating of its heart? Love, did it ever love so much it fell back to the earth, fell back to the earth to drown in this rain?~~

~~And if this was a not-dream, how had it not ended yet?~~

Mood: Six Feet Under (slowed down) by Billie Eilish

Jimin clutched the curved handle of the umbrella tightly, fingers shaking from the cold. His jacket was mostly dry by now, rain cascading around the halo of shelter he hid under as he walked. But his feet were drenched, socks squishing with water every step he took.

Thinking, thinking too much. Couldn't think about anything but Jungkook, Jungkook, Jungkook. Scared, Jimin was scared and he shouldn't be, shouldn't be scared.

Gripped the umbrella even tighter, terrified breaths shivering past his lips into the storm. And all around him was a sea of crystals fracturing against the ground, shattering his mind's eye. Ocean, ocean calling him forward, beckoning him through this wave of cracked opals and dark quartz.

Drowning in obsidians and onyx, bone wrapping spindly fingers around his throat as lightning clawed the sky, raking off-white talons through billowing clouds.

Peering through the storm, through the opal and quartz, obsidian and onyx. Searching, searching for the fine thread of gold that would guide him home. Glinting and pure and strong. Needed to find it, needed to find it before his lungs were coated in blues, embedded with black tourmaline.

And then he caught it, caught that fine gold. Grasped it with reverent hands, following it down the street, water sloshing around his ankles. Thrumming, something thrumming in his chest, taking him faster, taking him farther.

Turned the corner, only a few more houses.

Gold, gold getting brighter, but dimmer. Bright and dim, bright and dim. Something wrong; there was a shadow on his porch. Shadow - tainted gold, scratched pearl.

stopped, stopped right in his tracks and

and this shadow

this shadow was hunched in on itself, dead silent amongst the sea around them

drenched in obsidian, slit with onyx, caged by

caged by something, something

dangerous, something hurting

Could feel it, Jimin could feel the blistering *hurt,* feel it potent in the air. Coiling and curling and dreadfully dark, and Jimin couldn't breathe, and everything was blue. Blue and grey and black, and there was no gold anymore, and where had it gone?

Jimin's eyes shifted to the other side of the street to a dark silhouette of a car, not yet close enough to tell who it might belong to, who this person might be. Because it couldn't be Jungkook, not this shadow, not this pain. It could be, it could be anybody. Could be, it could be a monster, could be,

could be somebody, somebody dark, somebody like Minwo. And what if it was Minwo, what if, what if Minwo was the person sitting on his porch?

Heart beat, beat, beating fast. Faster and harder, heavy and hot in his chest. Pumping, pumping violent rubies through his blood. Couldn't think, because this shadow, this shadow, this shadow

Jimin's eyes skirted from the car to that inky blotch, back and forth

it had to be

had to be Jungkook

Braced his stomach, turning and twirling as he stepped closer and closer, closing the distance between the shadow and himself. Not enough light to see, rain still thundering from the sky, and Jimin was terrified. Because this shadow, this shadow, this shadow

raised its head

And Jimin stopped. Stopped breathing. Stopped moving. Fingers digging into his stomach as the fear, icy and cold and numb quickly turned into dread because this shadow, this shadow, this shadow *was* Jungkook.

And Jimin wasn't thinking anymore. Not thinking, charging forward. Dropped his umbrella, feet slapping through deep puddles with wet splashes as he took three of his porch steps in one stride, kneeling to see Jungkook's face better.

Brushed Jungkook's hood back, tilting his chin up, swiping away drenched bangs. Fingertips shocked with the drowned, shivering, broken shadow of the person he loved the most.

"Oh my baby," Jimin breathed, pressing kisses to Jungkook's chilled forehead. "Baby," he crooned through his tears, wrapping his arms over Jungkook's hunched shoulders. "What are you doing in the rain?"

Answer, no answer. Not even a whisper. Pulled back to look at the maknae: pale lips and dead eyes, lost in himself.

"Jungkook," Jimin gasped, thumbs swiping his cheekbones as he cupped Jungkook's face with wavering palms. "Jungkook? Look at me."

eyes so dark

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

"Why are you in the rain? What happened?" Jimin desperately brought their foreheads together. "Jungkook, what happened?"

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

"Oh my baby." Jimin pressed his lips to Jungkook's brow once more, just lingering, gently cradling the back of his neck. Felt Jungkook start to shake, shake harder, not just shivering.

Lightning flashed, thunder cracking after it, and there was obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx.

I love you, I love you, I love you, Jimin's heart chanted. Held onto Jungkook, something awful and crushing wrenching his chest, digging in deep. Sharp, everything in his heart was sharp with regret and black tourmaline, and Jimin never should've left.

“I’m sorry.”

It was the barest of whispers, needled with poison rain, drowned in obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx. But Jimin clutched onto those words like they were a lifeline, snapping back to look into Jungkook’s dark eyes once more.

“Sorry for what, Jungkook?” He asked softly, carefully.

Jungkook’s beautiful round eyes shimmered with tears, and Jimin didn’t want him to cry: he could tell Jungkook had cried for a while. Too hurt, Jungkook was too hurt, too shattered. Shattered like the crystal surrounding them. Shattered like Jimin had never seen.

“I did something bad.”

Jungkook’s words were that of ghosts: chilling and silent and haunted.

“What did you do?” Jimin asked, brow furrowing. Reached down to entwine his fingers with Jungkook’s, holding on tightly to his hands.

“Something… something unforgivable.”

Jimin was already shaking his head, squeezing the ice cold fingers in his grip even harder. “Whatever it is, whatever you did, it’s not unforgivable. Tell me what’s wrong, Jungkook-ah. Tell me what hurt you.”

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

“I’m sorry,” Jungkook blinked, tears rolling down his pale face. “I’m… I’m so… I’m so sorry,” he choked. “I’m so-” Shaking, Jungkook was shaking so badly, hands rattled in Jimin’s grip. “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Jimin hushed him, bringing Jungkook’s shaking hands up to his chin, kissing his pinky. “Why don’t we go inside? Can we do that?”

Jungkook didn’t say anything, shaking and shaking, shivers rattling his teeth. So Jimin pulled on his hands, urging him to stand. And Jungkook stood, but Jimin had to brace him as Jungkook started to sway, legs locked up with the cold.

“Let’s go inside,” Jimin said again, fumbling to get his free hand into the wet pocket of his black skinny jeans.

“I’m sorry.” Jungkook was shaking so hard Jimin almost dropped his keys, and it took him too long to realize Jungkook was weeping. Shadows dripping around his edges, dragging a chain of bone around his neck to hang. “I’m sorry.”

Jimin shook his head, blinking the image away as he slotted the key into the lock, turning it as Jungkook’s incoherent apologies babbled on. He briefly thought about Tae’s umbrella still out there in the rain, but once he felt another full-bodied shiver rattle through Jungkook, he decided Tae would understand if Jimin bought him a new one.

“Can you sit in this chair for me?” Jimin asked, gently maneuvering Jungkook towards the two little fold-up chairs by his plastic table. Eased Jungkook down to sit in one of them, water drip, drip, dripping into little puddles on the floor around them.

Jungkook started shivering harder, and Jimin hurriedly rushed to his bathroom, grabbing a towel

before making his way back to Jungkook.

The maknae had stopped with the apologies, but still looked dazed, lost. Sat there numbly, water droplets still sliding from his bangs down his face, a full on puddle beneath him. So Jimin gently held the towel in front of Jungkook's lowered eyes for him to see.

"Can I dry your hair, Jungkookie?"

Jungkook stared at the towel, shivering and shivering, drip-drops of water echoing through the room as they landed in the puddle beneath Jungkook's chair. Eventually managed a tiny nod.

So Jimin set to work gently towelling off Jungkook's hair. Carefully worked at patting his head and neck dry, making sure not to startle him. Had to stop a couple times when he started shaking again. And when he was done, Jungkook's head looked like a fluffed up porcupine, and he seemed to have calmed down at least a little more.

Jimin ran a hand through Jungkook's damp, poofed up hair, smoothing it down, trying to calm him enough to talk. But Jungkook was still shivering faintly, still looking anywhere but at him. "Let's change your clothes, okay?"

Jungkook didn't say anything.

Jimin fetched a hoodie and a pair of sweats that he'd stolen from Jungkook before moving out, hoping Jungkook wouldn't steal them back as he gently tugged the maknae out of the chair and into the bathroom. Put the pair of dry clothes in Jungkook's numb hands, telling him to change. Was almost worried Jungkook hadn't heard a word of what he'd said, but he shut the door carefully anyways, making sure to leave it unlocked just in case.

While Jungkook was hopefully changing, Jimin finally took care of himself. Towelled his head and neck off with the same towel he'd used on Jungkook, not wanting to interrupt Jungkook in the bathroom for another one. Then went into his bedroom, changing out of his uncomfortably wet, cold jeans and hoodie into his pajamas.

The bathroom door opened from down the hall, a sliver of yellow light expanding through the shadows, Jungkook's silhouette stretched across the wall. Jimin padded over, peeking into the bathroom to see that Jungkook really had changed, looking a lot more put together already.

"Jungkook-ah? Do you have your wet clothes? I can hang them up to dry."

Jungkook still wouldn't look Jimin in the eye, made Jimin even more nervous than before, wondering what could've happened to make Jungkook hurt like this. Because that's what it was: hurt, cold and sharp and cutting, cut right down to the bone. Made it hard to breathe, seeing the guilt, the regret shimmering in his eyes when Jungkook already had so much to bare as it was.

Jungkook stooped down, grabbing his soaked clothes off the floor before carefully handing them over to Jimin. And Jimin, Jimin couldn't help how his heart squeezed when Jungkook flinched back as their fingers brushed. Wondered… wondered if he himself had done this to Jungkook. Done this by leaving when Jungkook had needed him most.

Jimin went to grab his own wet clothes, and then pinned them all up on his drying rack. Took a bit too long to do such a quick task, afraid of what Jungkook had to say, what Jimin wanted to tell him.

So much, so much could go wrong tonight, and Jimin didn't know if he could do this after all. Didn't know if he could split himself open like he'd done for Jin, spill all his stories and secrets, the shame he'd buried beneath the harsh blues of depression, self-deprecation.

Because in the end, it was the shame that hurt the most. The shame he felt when telling others what Minwo had done to him. Because Minwo had ripped his body to shreds time and time again, and of course shame lit him up inside when thinking about that… but it wasn't just his body. Not just his body, no.

It was everything that Jimin was; Minwo had devoured him. Stolen every ounce of light Jimin had, crushed him up into a little cube to be stored away for when he was convenient. And Jimin, no matter what anybody had told him, could still only see how weak he'd been.

And he'd gotten better at shutting those thoughts away, he had. But after moving out of Jungkook's house, away from the hyung's, he felt like he'd taken ten steps back. Felt like all that peace and happiness he'd found had been swiped from beneath his feet just as quickly as he'd found it.

A cycle.

Neverending, never gone. Always turning, turning, turning. But it'd helped, talking to Jin. Had helped a lot, and Jimin was still learning, still working on what it meant to heal. Still remembered Jin's suggestion to go to therapy.

There was a sound off to Jimin's left, and when his head snapped towards it, he saw Jungkook kneeling on the floor, using a towel to wipe up the puddle of water and all the drips and wet footprints they'd made coming inside.

Ache, ache; Jimin's heart ached. Wanted to just pull Jungkook into his arms and hold him, ease away all these words he still needed to confess. Wanted to go back to those simple nights mere weeks ago with just them and a yellow blanket, empty glasses of water on the nightstand.

Jimin walked over to where Jungkook knelt, gently taking the maknae's hand, pulling him to stand up. "Let's go talk," he suggested softly, offering Jungkook a small smile.

Jungkook still wouldn't look at him, eyes downcast, but he nodded, letting Jimin guide him into the dark bedroom.

"Do you want me to turn the lights on?" Jimin asked.

Jungkook shook his head.

Jimin let go of Jungkook's hand, going over to the window. Raised the blinds, letting the dull haze of city lights through the storm light the room just a tiny bit more. Could see Jungkook alright enough, so he figured it was better than nothing.

Jimin carefully lowered himself to sit on his mattress, the window higher above it from where it laid on the floor. Patted the spot next to him. "Come sit over here. I have a feeling… I have a feeling we'll be talking for a while."

Jungkook was looking down at his hands, twisting his fingers together, fiddling. "Hyung… I can't."

Jimin patted the space beside him again, fixing Jungkook with a stern look. "Would you rather sit on my two little plastic chairs out there?"

Jungkook sighed, pausing for a moment before shaking his head, taking a few hesitant steps closer. Almost as if he was afraid Jimin would snap at him any moment now. And that, that made Jimin hurt more than anything he'd gone through these past two weeks on his own.

Have I become a monster, after all?

Jimin carefully pushed himself to stand up, wiping his sweaty palms on his pajama pants. Legs shaking, knees knocking together, feet almost numb as he made his way to where Jungkook had stopped, staring at the floor.

“Jungkook,” Jimin murmured, voice low, the lisp of his Busan satoori slipping into his words more than he liked. “You probably hate me now, and I’m sorry.” Whispered those words so softly, feeling every single shot of pain at admitting what he was finding to be the truth. Jimin shut his eyes tight, so hard they ached a little as he willed tears away. “I shouldn’t have left. I promised… I promised I would stay, but I left anyways… and I’m sorry. I’m sorry I let you down.”

Fingertips, chilled and shaking, brushed over the back of his hand. Jimin’s eyes slowly fluttered open, heart stilling at how close Jungkook was now, no longer closed off, no longer avoiding his gaze.

No, now Jungkook was standing so close Jimin could feel a soft breath fanning his chin. Could finally see into those beautifully rounded eyes, see the echo of a storm, a failing of light. But beyond that, Jimin could still see gold. Gold and pearl, soft as silk. Young, youth still woven with everything bright and hopeful.

“I’m not…” Jungkook’s hand finally curled around Jimin’s, still terribly cold, the scent of rain swirling through Jimin’s head. “It’s me, hyung. It’s something… it’s not you. It’s something I’ve done. And I’m… ashamed. I’m… I’m scared… terrified of what,” Jungkook’s chest rose with a deep breath. “I don’t hate you.”

Jimin tried, tried to believe that was the case. That it wasn’t because Jimin had left, but Jimin couldn’t think of anything Jungkook could’ve possibly done to warrant this amount of shame, of guilt. “Jungkook-ah, you don’t… you can tell me the truth. I’m not weak… you can tell me if it’s something I’ve done.”

Jungkook’s eyes were locked with his.

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

“It’s nothing you did.”

Jimin didn’t understanding, didn’t understand where all of this hurt was coming from, then. Because moments like this were *always* something Jimin had done. Hurt, had always left hurt scattered not far behind him. Only ever hurt people, so why should now be any different?

“Jungkook-ah,” Jimin’s voice wavered. “Please, please don’t… don’t lie to me.” Jimin tried pulling his hand from Jungkook’s grasp, already knowing where this conversation would end. Would end with Jungkook finally revealing that it was because of Jimin after all, and that whatever had been going on between them before couldn’t continue.

Jungkook’s eyes were filling with tears again, and Jimin’s heart cracked. “Hyung, I’m scared to… I’m scared to tell you.”

Jimin loosed a breath, reaching up with his free hand to brush a tear off of Jungkook’s cheek, thumb caressing the little scar on his cheekbone. “I trust you, Jungkook-ah. Do you trust *me?”*

Jungkook nodded quickly, more tears splashing down his face, over Jimin’s hand. “Of course, Jimin. Of course I trust you.”

Jimin gave Jungkook a weary smile. Cracking, heart cracking again and again. “You’ll tell me the truth, then, right? You’ll tell me…” *Tell me if it really was me. If you hate me now. If there’s no way we can make this right.* “Please. Jungkook-ah, you have to tell me, okay?”

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

Jungkook nodded, slowly reaching up, carefully taking Jimin’s hand away from his face. “I’m sorry.”

Jimin nodded, too, tears quickly rising in his own eyes. “I know. I know you are. So tell me.”

“I’m in love with you.”

Froze, freezing up. Jimin’s world crashing around the edges of his universe, spilling and sloshing into oblivion. Breath caught in his throat as gold wrapped shock around his heart. Couldn’t, couldn’t believe, couldn’t believe that

“I’m in love with you, Jimin, and-“

Jimin shook his head, terrified.

Because this, he didn’t deserve *this.* Didn’t deserve these feelings, couldn’t believe Jungkook could have possibly fallen for someone like *him.*

Eyes flitted between Jungkook’s, breath spiking through the worlds between them.

“Jungkook,” Jimin’s breath clawed through his lungs, wreaking havoc. “You can’t… you’re not in love with me… I’m not…”

And tell them what?

shook his head

That you’re a little gay whore who lies about everything?

couldn’t, couldn’t, couldn’t

Where was it that dancer fuck found you again? A gutter? A little gutter rat he took in because you were so pitiful.

“Jimin?”

And how many families didn’t want you? Was it 5 or 6? I forget.

Tears, tears sliding down Jimin’s face. Couldn’t hold, couldn’t hold himself up anymore. Head too light, everything too heavy. Stumbled back a few steps.

Your brother doesn’t even want you anymore.

“Jimin,” Jungkook panicked. “Are you… are you okay?”

You lived on the streets. You slept in a gutter while your brother slept in a bed because nobody wanted you.

This was everything that had been tearing Jimin up: not feeling worthy, not feeling like a*person.* Everything, everything. And it was being confronted by this beautiful young man in front of him with his stunning eyes and gorgeous soul.

Jimin's ankles touched the edges of his mattress, almost tripping backwards. "I knew you," tears choking him up, burning everything. "I knew you liked me… but you're," Jimin shook his head, raking another shaking hand through his hair. "You're in love with me?"

Jungkook was shifting from foot to foot, as if he had more to say, more secrets to spill. And it hit Jimin, hit him that maybe his love confession hadn't been the punchline.

"You didn't know that?" Jungkook asked, distressed. "You didn't have any clue?"

Jimin let himself sit on the mattress, pulling his knees up to his chest as he thought about the kisses they'd shared. Thought about the reverence in Jungkook's touches, the silvery passion he'd pressed into every touch. And maybe Jimin had thought at some point that Jungkook could love him back just as much, but he'd never allowed himself to believe it.

Jimin shook his head, bottom lip wobbly as tears soaked his face. Brought his wrist up to his mouth, pressing it beneath his nose as he bit back a sob, looking up at Jungkook through the cracks in his heart.

"Is it really…" Jungkook's soul, Jimin could see the whole of it, laid out bare between them. See the wrenching heartache about to crash down on him. "Is it really that awful? That I'm in love with you?"

Jimin sobbed, pressing his wrist into his nose as he rocked forward, shaking his head again and again because it *hurt so much.* And love confessions were supposed to be a happy thing, but Jimin realized he'd never really had one. Had only ever had someone tell him he belonged to them. That he was theirs and theirs alone; that wasn't a confession of love.

This was.

And how could Jimin let Jungkook love someone as fractured and broken as he was? How could he possibly begin to accept this love when he didn't even know how normal love was supposed to work?

"You idiot," Jimin wept, seeing Jungkook's soul start to crumble beneath obsidian and onyx. "I'm in love with you, too."

Jungkook sat next to Jimin, pulling him into his chest. Just hugged him, hugged him as hard as he could while Jimin sobbed.

Held him. Held all of his cracked pieces together as Jimin relaxed into his arms. Held him until the sobs turned to little sniffles, until tears dampened his shirt and all there was to hear was the rain downpouring outside. Held him until Jimin was easing out of his embrace, pulling back to look at him with those ocean eyes.

And then Jimin kissed him, lips touching softly to Jungkook's, and Jungkook kissed him back.

Threaded his fingers through Jimin's blond hair, cradling the back of his neck as Jimin's hands cupped his face.

Salt, the kiss tasted of salt and tears and rain. Tasted of moon-spun dreams and crystalline love: pure and clear and aching.

Kissed, lips moving with soft, wet sounds. Pulled back, Jungkook pulled back only to gently peck Jimin's full bottom lip, his full top lip individually. Gazed at Jimin's closed, fluttering eyes, long lashes painting dainty shadows over flushed cheeks by the dark grey light coming from the world outside.

Jungkook couldn't help but marvel, eyes wide in awe at Jimin's beauty before his heart started thumping in his ears, heat searing through his entire body with the love he felt for this person. The love he felt for Jimin.

Heart swelled with it, swelled with love. Filled to the brim, past breaking, with all things *Jimin, Jimin, Jimin* . And so he delved back in before Jimin could wonder why the kiss had stopped, before he could catch Jungkook's unabashed awe.

Kissed, they were kissing so gently. Hands smoothing and cradling and hot. Lips warm, tongues slowly sliding together and Jungkook was so lost, lost in everything that was happening. Lost in Jimin's sweet little breaths, threading his fingers through blonde locks, fingertips curling around Jimin's ears.

obsidian and onyx

I gave Jimin the USB.

Jungkook jerked away from the kiss, head spinning, spinning, spinning. Stared back at Jimin through the dimness of the room, the occasional flash of lightning from outside pattering across the smooth plains of Jimin's face: blue and white and smooth. Flashed through Jimin's pretty hazel eyes - they'd been brown just months ago, hadn't they?

it's not your choice

and it's not mine

it's not anyone's choice but his

"Jungkook-ah," Jimin's low, soothing voice curled through Jungkook's eardrums like a hot shiver. "What's wrong? What else… what else do you need to tell me?"

Jungkook refused to let any more tears fall. Didn't deserve to cry, not when it was Jimin that he was about to hurt. Not when this would be the last time they would talk, if the scenarios in Jungkook's head were correct. Didn't deserve to cry when he was about to throw Jimin's suffering right back in his face.

"Hyung… before I tell you… before I tell you, I want you to know that…" Jungkook clasped Jimin's smaller hands in his own, eyes burning and burning, tears unshed. "I love you. I've loved you for a long time now." Heard Jimin's breath catch, but continued. "And thank you."

Jungkook brought Jimin's precious hands up to his lips, kissing his knuckles, turning his hands to kiss his palms. Kissed his scar-flecked wrists, closing his eyes as all the air in his chest squeezed out, leaving his lungs achingly empty. Let the ache build and build and build as a tear finally tracked down his face.

“Jungkookie,” Jimin whispered, terror stark, frigid in the air.

“I…” Jungkook choked in a breath. Lungs, lungs not full, not full enough. Couldn’t, couldn’t allow himself to breathe properly. Lose, gonna lose Jimin, lose the person that had made his last few months of freedom so beautiful.

“I filmed it.”

beat, beat; heart beating like the slam of a door, reverberating through his ribs

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

“Filmed what?” Came Jimin’s horrified words, hands shaking in Jungkook’s grasp.

Pressed Jimin’s wrists to his forehead, bowing in shame and grief and obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx. Breathe, didn’t breathe, didn’t want to breathe. Flinched when Jimin twisted a wrist from Jungkook’s hold, and Jungkook knew this was the beginning of the end.

Didn’t expect Jimin to gently lift his chin. Didn’t expect Jimin to lean forward and kiss his forehead again and again, peppering kisses down the bridge of his rounded nose, over his shut eyelids. Heartbreakingly tender and gentle, Jungkook knew he didn’t deserve this. Wrenched back from Jimin’s kisses, shaking his head, finally opening his eyes.

Tears, silver pearls beading in Jimin’s eyes as stormlight wove through, glinting in Jungkook’s vision.

“That night. That night in Minwo’s kitchen.” Shame, shame, twisting a white-hot knife through his third and fourth ribs, searing through bone. “I was there… I was there because,” ducked away from Jimin’s attempt to take his hand. “I filmed you! I filmed him… I filmed him *hurting* you.”

And nothing could describe the look on Jimin’s face.

Nothing would be able to.

Nothing.

“Why?”

Jungkook’s world. Tipping. Tipping over, slamming into a swinging arch away from the ground. “Evidence.”

Jimin tilted his head to the side, as if he didn’t understand. As if his mind wasn’t letting him understand. “Evidence?” Quiet, spoken so quietly the pitter-patter of rain against the window almost drowned it out.

“I thought… I thought getting proof… getting proof that he was hurting you would… I thought it would… but I couldn’t, I couldn’t do it.” Breathing too much now, too much. White spots dancing through his vision, and Jimin should’ve left Jungkook to drown in the rain. Should’ve left him out there to rot as pearlescent tears rolled down Jimin’s cheeks.

“I couldn’t do it.”

“But you… but you did.”

“I did.”

“You didn’t… you didn’t want to be friends, then. You lied about… about all of that?”

“I did.”

“Where…”

“The USB.”

“You didn’t… care?”

“I cared too much.”

“You’re in love with me?”

“I love you.”

A 13 year old boy, digging through a dumpster. Ripping open the trash bags he crushed beneath his feet. Looking for food. Hungry eyes and desperate, shaking hands, stomach drowning in its own acid.

want you, want you

nobody wants you

5 or

6

Apple, found an apple wrapped in some sort of silk cloth.

Perfect apple.

Couldn’t stop himself as he started crying, weeping at his lucky find. Crouched in the dumpster, pressing the apple to his lips.

white room

white room

camera in front of him

5 or 6?

chair, blond hair, sitting still

camera

shrugged

Jimin took a bite of the apple.

Black boots sloshing through puddles.

Slow. Methodical. Quiet.

Came to a stop in front of the open umbrella laying at his feet. Quirked his head to the side, peering at it in curiosity. Bent down. Picked it up.

K T H

“Always forgetting things, Min-ah.”

obsidian and onyx

Chapter End Notes

god..
this last month has been a storm. i've shed a lot of tears and felt my heart break time and time again with all the goodbyes i had to say to people i will never see again. but i'm doing a lot better now.. and i wanted to thank each and every one of you (both the commenters and my silent readers) for your support. i was just getting to a dark place and read some of the comments and thought -well, if my characters seem hopeless, with problems that will never be solved... what should i do with my own demons? what does that make me?-
it wasn't a healthy thing to do, to immediately throw in the towel and say i was quitting. i'm sorry i did that (if you're an og reader of this story from back when i used to post a pre-written chapter every day, you'll know very very well that i have no impulse control)
but part of me... isn't sorry?
i read every. single. comment. and i was completely blown away by the Massive support. the stories. the personal experiences...
i had no idea my words had such an impact.
i won't be so quick to quit anymore, i promise you that. i was sobbing while reading those comments on a marshrutka in ukraine.. and i just wanted to thank you all again for the hope you filled my heart with, and for the kindness.
thank you so, so much.

ps. big shout out to Stankris on Tumblr who beta read this chapter for me!! go look them up and give them a follow - they're awesome.

if you ever, EVER need someone to talk to... i'll always be here. i will always listen. i will never judge you. you can message me on tumblr @ idreaminmono - my inbox is always open..

sorry this note is so long lol

kaleidoscopes

Mood: Love Me by Stanaj

“I couldn’t do it.”

Jimin’s vision was stained glass, a kaleidoscope of color: it was twisting, rattling through his pupils and he couldn’t couldn’t couldn’t see past it. Couldn’t see Jungkook or the room around him or the mattress or the window or the shadows or the

“But you…” Jimin gasped in a breath, watching as the patterns dancing through his eyes changed, changed. “But you did.”

“I did.”

said, said so quietly

kaleidoscope

twisting a kaleidoscope

rain, rain the only sound, only sound pattering, pattering, pattering

“You didn’t… you didn’t want to be friends, then.” Jimin was filled with empty mirrors, shattered colors. Hugged himself, on the mattress, rocked back and forth. “You lied about… all of that?”

lie

lie

lie

caught in a

lie

And again, only a small, pained, “I did.”

And colors were bursting, splitting apart at their seams, oozing other-dimensional colors that didn’t exist in this world. Colors, colors that couldn’t be called colors. Things that weren’t colors but could be colors, maybe should be colors.

kaleidoscope

“Where…”

Wanted, Jimin wanted to ask. Wanted to ask where this video was. Suddenly thought of

“The USB.”

Made sense.

oozing

bursting

smelting of non-colors

Gasping, gasping in all the real colors he could. Tried blinking away the twisting shapes, distorted glass fogging his vision. Tried to look for Jungkook. Jungkook, who was right in front of him? Right in… right in front of him…

Reached out, reaching for the one sort of comfort he needed. The one thing that had hurt him so much. Couldn't help but think that Jihyun was right, that Jimin always went back to what hurt him the most.

"You didn't…" Jimin's eyes were empty mirrors, empty mirrors, empty mirrors. "Care?"

Hands finally grasped onto something, something ice cold. Jungkook's hands. Pulled at him, needed him closer. Needed to see him through this kaleidoscopic haze. Needed to needed to needed to

understand

"I cared too much."

cared

cared

past tense, right?

Couldn't fucking see. And were these non-colors bruises or glass? Hurt, everything hurt enough that he couldn't really tell the difference. Because had this whole thing really been a lie? A non-dream? Were these colors colors or were they not-colors and and

"You're in love with me?"

That's what Jungkook had said earlier, at least. Before this… before this *revelation.* Before he'd told Jimin that everything had been a lie. That Jungkook hadn't wanted to be friends again, hadn't cared, hadn't even thought of Jimin as a person; Jungkook had thought of him as *evidence.*

"Yes…" Jungkook's icy hands finally held Jimin's, finally held him back. "I love you."

Jimin wanted to scream, scream, *scream* . Tear his hair out in frustration. Pick through Fate's loom, find what everything meant. Understand all at once. Understand what to do, how to feel, what to say.

But he couldn't.

Struck, struck dumb. Jimin was struck dumb. Couldn't find anything he could say, should say, would say. Wanted to be able to pluck answers out of the air. Wanted to say he understood, understood how hurting Jungkook must've been to go after *evidence* like that. Wanted to pardon everything and fill his heart with nothing but love

but

he

was

angry

And all the self-loathing, self-doubt, self… self- *rage* came back. And he was angry because again, he'd been so *naive* and he'd been played so fucking *wonderfully* , so easily. He'd been used again again *again.*

"Do the hyungs know?" Jimin let go of Jungkook's icy hands. Rubbed at the center of his chest, right above his heart. "Were they…" Choking, choking on tears, and Jimin's heart was finally breaking. Breaking along with the mirrors in his gaze, the kaleidoscope crunching glass. "Were they in on it, too? They thought of me as *evidence,* too?"

and that possibility hurt so

it hurt so

"No, no, no. They don't… they still don't know."

Jimin scratched, scratched at the tender skin right below his collar bones. Wanted to claw his throat out. Because breathing and speaking were two things that were too hard, and Jimin's heart was beating through his whole body, and Jimin wanted to stop it before he spoke too much of it out into the world like he'd always done.

Jimin looked up.

Could finally see Jungkook.

Jungkook, who was obsidian and onyx, a throw of shadows, wrapped in so much pain Jimin knew he was telling the truth. The ugly truths and the lighter truths Jimin's heart had soaked up. And Jimin loved him, loved him so much.

"Why?" Jimin's voice was cracked and splintered, and the air in his lungs was gone, gone, gone. And he just wanted to find something, anything, that could make this right. That could patch him up just as he was shredding himself apart. "Am I still… am I still evidence?"

Jimin glanced up at Jungkook again, who was still keeping his distance. As if touching Jimin was forbidden now, as if, as if *Jimin* was forbidden. And Jimin was so fucking angry, surprised at how angry he was… but beyond the anger, he just wanted Jungkook to tell him their current relationship hadn't been built on a massive lie.

"You can tell me the truth," Jimin murmured, seeing how Jungkook's arms were hugging his stomach, the maknae shaking and pale, refusing to look anywhere but the floor. "You can tell me how you really feel."

Jungkook's eyes lifted to Jimin's. "I love you," he whispered, gaze piercing. "But I don't deserve you. After what I did… I don't deserve… I don't deserve *love.* I never did… and I should say goodbye."

Anger, white-hot, shoving through Jimin's veins. And he was so fucking furious now. Finally stood from the mattress, stood so fast his legs nearly buckled, head spinning for a moment as he grabbed a fistfull of Jungkook's shirt, looking right into his eyes.

"Don't you fucking say that."

Jungkook look terrified. "What?"

“You…” Tears, tears burning Jimin’s eyes, watering his vision. “You told me for *months* that I deserve love, and *so do you.* If you don’t, then I don’t, either.”

Jungkook tried taking a step back, a step away. But Jimin refused to let go, holding Jungkook in place with more strength than he thought he had. “I’m really, really angry with you,” Jimin almost growled. “But that doesn’t mean you get to run away. Because running *does nothing!* I should know!”

Jungkook’s eyes caught the glint of empty mirrors in Jimin’s, and Jimin had always loved Jungkook’s beautiful, round eyes. Loved them so much, but right now all he could see was the person he loved giving up, giving in, pliant to the world’s clutches.

Jungkook had given up.

And Jimin’s world was made of kaleidoscopes, like the realms of day and night: clashed together in a thunderous scream. Two different worlds coming from two opposite poles, and everything was mingling, mingling during this not-time, saturated with colors from not-realms. Drowning in marble, fissures in the columns upholding everything he was.

Not the first fissures, though-- no. Only grew, crackling along the surface, grown beyond what had already been there: crevices in the foundation of his childhood. Things which every person must destroy before they can become themselves. Should’ve destroyed those fissures long ago.

Because even though they mend on the surface, foundation looked like a slate wiped clean, Jimin knew the truth. Relived that truth here and now, looking into the eyes of yet another person in his life that had given up. Because it was like his parents all over again. His brother, with dull eyes and protruding ribs. The social workers during the silent drives back to wherever Jimin had run away from.

Jimin’s own eyes.

And this, Jimin was familiar with these cracks in his foundation. Thought he’d maybe left them behind. Was only now discovering they’d been there the whole time, festering in the most secret recesses of his inner self, continuing to live and bleed.

“I need time,” Jimin murmured, using all his remaining strength just to say those words. “Time to forgive you… like you forgave me.”

And Jimin would. He would forgive Jungkook eventually. But for now, for now, for now he was *hurt.* He was hurt he was hurting and why the fuck did this hurt so much?

Jungkook wasn’t saying anything, and Jimin knew, knew exactly what Jungkook must be thinking; was probably thinking something along the lines of *undeserving* and *saying goodbye.* And Jimin’s heart fractured just that much more, and he didn’t know how many more fractures or fissures or cracks he could take before he shattered apart, unable to be put back together again.

And Jimin didn’t know what else to do at that moment. Didn’t know, didn’t know what to say, how to act with this hurting, given-up person when all Jimin felt was shattered glass and anger white-hot and melting. So he watched Jungkook. Watched heavy tears roll down his face. And he reached out, fingers slowly curling around Jungkook’s hand.

“You should sleep,” Jimin insisted, knowing he couldn’t stay any longer. “Sleep in my bed.”

Cold, Jungkook’s hand was still so cold and he was so broken apart that Jimin couldn’t look him in the eye without searching for gold that wasn’t there right now— not gone… hidden. Buried deep

inside, smothered in pain.

So Jimin did the only thing he could think of to do. Pulled Jungkook to his little mattress and guided him down, lightly pressing on his shoulders until his back was flat against the mattress. Saw the shivers wracking through the maknae's body as he pulled his only blanket up and over, tucking it just under Jungkook's chin.

Fought, had to fight back that anger, that rage. Felt it flicker inside of him like a shame-lit candle, all ash and cinders. Bit back the word *evidence* and leaned forward, planting a lingering kiss on Jungkook's temple. Tears simmering in his eyes as he brushed a shaking hand through Jungkook's dark charcoal hair.

"You're leaving again."

Jimin didn't respond. Couldn't, not with the tears now clinging to his lashes, a swelling of *why's* trapped in his chest. Pulled back, eyes still closed, cheeks wet, heart breaking and breaking. Kneeling there by the mattress, head hung as he wiped tears away with the back of his hand, Jungkook's shivering form at his fingertips.

"Where's your phone?" Jimin asked instead.

Jungkook's eyes were heavy-lidded, filled with exhaustion from all the pain implanted deep in their swirling depths. "My car."

Jimin nodded, wiping more tears away, trying to swallow everything down. Had to be strong, just until he was alone. Had to be strong; he couldn't let Jungkook see his hurt, not right now. Not now, not now. Stood up, numbness tingling through the backs of his thighs and calves. Weak, felt weak as he stumbled a few steps out of the room before he gained back his balance.

Left Jungkook in the darkness, left him there. Passed the hanging towels and dripping clothes, somehow finding himself opening the front door and stepping into the smattering rain.

And Jimin cried.

Sank down, gripping his head as the rain drenched him all over again. Found himself in the same place he'd found Jungkook, and Jimin cried and cried. Cried until his eyes were swollen and hot and red, until he'd scratched and clawed at his arms, skin and blood under his nails. Pulled at his hair until his scalp was sore, body heaving out sobs.

"Why?" The silent scream tore from Jimin's throat. "Why?" He sobbed, scratching and pulling and aching.

But the storm didn't care. Storms never cared, never cared, nobody ever *fucking cared.*

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

evidence

“Evidence?” Jimin screamed into his arm, every sound of his still muffled by the storm. “Evidence?”

he was *e v i d e n c e*

“Just fucking evidence?” Jimin wept, clutching weakly at the railing, memories from that night slamming into him.

Don’t let him hurt you.

Don’t let him hurt you.

Don’t let him hurt you.

Don’t let him hurt you.

Don’t let him hurt you.

Didn’t matter now, did it? None of it did. Because lie, lie, everything had been a lie. Everything done for evidence. And Jimin had given Jungkook so much of him, so much of his heart, so much *evidence.*

What was there left now?

Nothing, nothing left but Jimin’s cracks and fissures and fractures. Nothing left. Nothing left. Nothing left but evidence.

So Jimin let that nothingness fill him, fill him up like it’d done so many times in the past. Like it had filled Jungkook. Let it fill him up until he was able to stand, eyes cracking porcelain, heart shrivelled and hidden. And he made his way through the continuing downpour towards Jungkook’s car.

Found the phone in the passenger seat. Turned it on, unlocking it with a pin, tapping on the calling app.

And Jimin was going to call Yoongi. Call and tell him to come take care of Jungkook. Take care of him because Jimin couldn’t right now. But the app opened to Jungkook’s call history, and one name popped up five times in the past two hours.

Lee Hayoon - Missed

Lee Hayoon - Missed

Lee Hayoon - Missed

Lee Hayoon - Missed

Lee Hayoon - Answered

They'd spoken. Urgent, must've been urgent if she'd called so many times. And looking at the time, it'd been only fifteen minutes before Jimin had found the wreckage of Jungkook on his porch, broken and apologizing. And something didn't make sense, didn't make sense at all.

Because *Hayoon* had been the one to give Jimin the USB, not Jungkook. Hayoon had given it to him, had looked, sounded so guilty. And her words, her words rang through his mind again and again.

I'm sorry, Jimin-ssi.

I'm so sorry.

Why did she apologize? And why, why had she been by the police station that day? Why had she been there with the USB, when Jimin now knew what was on it? Why had she had it in the first place?

Jungkook's first words upon seeing him just hours ago…

I'm sorry.

The calls, the apologies, the USB. None of it made any sense, and before Jimin knew what he was doing, he'd pressed the call button on Jungkook's phone, and it was ringing. Ringing and ringing until finally-

" *Jungkook-ah?"* Voice was weak, weak and small and careful, so careful.

"We need to talk."

The monitor beeped, eyes unblinking as she stared up at the familiar white ceiling. Night, it was night time, and the door handle creaked as the nurse came in to check on her.

Jisoo's eyes shifted from the ceiling, down to the nurse.

And before, before she knew what was happening, she was pushing through the fog in her mind. Pushing through the clouds and mist, eyes clearing just a fraction as her hands twitched.

Nurse wasn't looking at her, doing something with one of the machines hooked up to her. Replacing a bag of liquid suspended from a metal rack, typing something on her medical ipad, checking to make sure all the tubes and needles feeding into Jisoo's body were in place.

Fingertips, fingertips scratching at the pillows propping them up. Sensation zinging through her mind, and she needed… she needed…

"Hay…"

The beginnings of words scratched at her throat, and how long had Jisoo been here? Where was… where was Hayoon? Hayoon, who sat by her side for hours and hours, voice filtering hazily through Jisoo's mind.

Nurse was finally looking at Jisoo's face, brow furrowed, alert. And Jisoo tried, tried reaching for her hand, tried to get her muscles to move, but they wouldn't, wouldn't cooperate.

"Hay…" A wheezed cough. *"Hayoon."*

The nurse's eyes widened, mouth dropping open in shock.

"Need… Hayoon…"

Mood: The Truth Untold cover by Suggi

The rain was easing, finally letting up. Word still dark and silent, streets flooded with water, little rivers slithering into drains. And Jimin was almost to the park, making his way through street after street by the dim light of street lamps.

After Hayoon agreed to meet him, Jimin'd hung up, sitting in Jungkook's car. Stared at the way rain pattered down over the windshield, suddenly realizing there was something yellow in the back seat.

The yellow blanket.

Jungkook had brought it with him.

Jimin had tentatively reached back and grabbed it, bringing it up to his nose, nuzzling his tear-swollen face into the soft, lightly scented fabric. Had sat there for longer than he cared to admit, pressing his face into the brightness of it, trying to piece himself together enough to do what he needed to do.

He'd gone back inside, yellow blanket bunched in his arms. Gone back to his bedroom where he found Jungkook passed out, sleeping. And Jimin had draped the yellow blanket over his body, tucking it up and over the other one, right to the maknae's chin. He'd then set Jungkook's phone on the floor by the mattress, heart caught in a pulling rhythm of aching and swelling, easing and shredding.

And then he'd started walking.

Walking, and now here he was. In a park he'd never once been to, with rain trickling through the cold rustling of tree leaves. Blue with darkness, the park was haunting in the magnificence of night, Jimin almost finding himself lost in the depths of it all.

He found the park bench Hayoon had described over the phone, sat on the faded wooden planks even though they soaked his bottom with ice cold puddles in a matter of seconds. And he waited.

Waited until there was the brief sound of a car, until the echo of a door shutting and footsteps sklishing through muddy grass.

Didn't look up, not even when the slim figure came to a stop in front of him.

Quiet.

Silence.

Whatever other fucking word needed to explain the pausing of sound, of life. The frozen increments between seconds, filled with nothingness, drowned and watery and hollow.

Evidence.

Jimin lightly thumbed at the USB clenched in his small fingers. Ran the tip of his thumb over the chilled, metallic surface. Sleek and black and deadly, it was no better than a gun.

“I thought I recognized you,” Jimin whispered, his voice a low hum, smoothed over by his Busan lisp. “I couldn’t stop thinking about it, the first few times I met you.”

Hayoon shifted from foot to foot in front of him, still not saying anything.

Jimin finally looked up at her, eyes tired and dead and cold. Leaned back on the park bench, wrapping an arm over his stomach, elbow resting on his forearm as he brought the USB to his lips. Ran the cold metal over his full bottom lip as he seemed to ponder.

“Hayoon-ssi… when were you going to tell Jungkook… tell me… tell the *world* … that you were Minwo’s girlfriend?”

A soft smile graced Minwo’s lips as he ran his fingertips over Jungkook’s sleeping face. Trailed his fingers over his lips and cheeks and through his damp hair. Watched as Jungkook shuddered in his sleep, something broken, something shattered about him.

“You’re so pretty, Jungkookie. You always were. So pretty, so bewildered about everything in life.”

Minwo tugged lightly at some of Jungkook’s dark strands, watching the way the maknae’s eyes fluttered with nightmares. Laid on his side beside Jungkook, the yellow blanket oddly grey in the darkness of the room. Leaned forward, draping his arm over Jungkook’s waist, smiling and smiling as he touched the tip of his nose to Jungkook’s brow. Sniffed, his lungs filling with the sweet scent of ruined youth.

Minwo smoothed his palm up to Jungkook’s shoulder, face not a sliver away from Jungkook’s still. “He left you, didn’t he? Left you here just for me. A present. Min-ah, always so sweet.”

Tongue flicked out, licking a strip up the bridge of Jungkook’s cutely rounded nose. Licked his way over Jungkook’s eyelids and forehead, planting tongue-wetted kisses on Jungkook’s cheeks, then his lips.

Reached a hand up, cupping Jungkook’s neck as he planted another kiss on Jungkook’s lips. Another. Black eyes fluttered shut as he slipped his tongue past the seam of Jungkook’s lips

and then Minwo was being yanked up, head spiraling as his shoulders were slammed into the wall.

“Don’t you fucking touch him,” Namjoon growled, hands fisted in Minwo’s shirt. Lip curled up into a snarl, shaking Minwo again before slamming him back into the wall over and over again. “Don’t you *fucking* dare.”

Minwo held up his hands in defeat, smirking lazily as his head tipped back, staring at Namjoon thorough dark, hooded eyes.

“You forget so easily, Joon-ah.” Minwo patted his coat pocket, smirk darkening into something half-crazed. “You forget.”

Namjoon’s white-knuckled grip on Minwo’s shirt reluctantly eased, the monster taking a step back from his master. Eyes cast to the floor, hands balled into fists, shaking with fury. And it amused Minwo to no end when Namjoon still positioned himself to shield the sleeping young man.

“Did you get what you came here for?”

Minwo scoffed, huffing as he turned away, towards the door. “It’s been over a year and you still underestimate me.”

Namjoon didn’t say anything, and Minwo knew the monster had tears in his eyes, was looking down at Jungkook’s shuddering body.

“This is what you wanted, Joonie,” Minwo murmured softly, glancing back to see that Namjoon was indeed crying. Minwo stepped towards the rapper, placing a hand on his shoulder. “This is what you wanted, and this is what happened.”

Namjoon shoved Minwo’s hand away, angry tears splashing down his face. “You’ll pay for this. For all of this. One day you’ll run out of schemes, and Fate will catch up to you.”

Minwo’s eyes flicked towards the softness of the yellow blanket, resisting the urge to grin. “That’ll be the day I press the button, regardless of where you are.”

Both their gazes snapped to the floor by the edge of the mattress, Jungkook’s phone buzzing.

“It’s Yoongi,” Namjoon informed. “I’m guessing he’ll be here soon. Jimin wouldn’t have just left Jungkook alone like this.”

Minwo walked out of the bedroom without a word, plastic bags tucked in his pockets, button in the other. Walked away, Namjoon’s footsteps echoing faintly behind his own seconds later. Heard the monster’s whispered apologies to the sleeping maknae, and Minwo couldn’t help but smile again.

The taste of Jungkook lingered on the tip of Minwo’s tongue as he and his little monster disappeared into the night, hidden under Minwo’s new umbrella.

stigma

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mood: Stigma by BTS

Hayoon's eyes widened, mouth dropping open a little, and Jimin watched her struggle. Watched her struggle to come up with an answer. Pressed the USB harder into his lips, everything in him locking, locking, locking up.

"What… I don't… how did you…"

Jimin's gaze sharpened, eyes narrowing as he watched the slim woman in front of him start shaking, grasp slipping on her phone. Watched as the device clattered to the damp ground, narrowly missing a puddle. She didn't even pick it up, just staring at Jimin with terrified eyes.

"I recognized you," Jimin repeated quietly. "From the moment I saw you, I thought there was something familiar about you. I never really thought about it until tonight when I found Jungkook having a panic attack on my porch because of *this,"* Jimin spat, hand trembling as he motioned to the USB.

"How?" Hayoon asked, voice tiny, horrified.

"The pictures on Minwo's wall."

Hayoon didn't even blink, eyes watering and glassy as she stared back at Jimin, obviously not understanding.

"For a year," Jimin started, running a hand through his wet hair. "I was locked up in his house with nothing and no one… just me, waiting by his door like a love-sick puppy for my only connection to the outside world to come home. But you knew about that part, didn't you? You're the one that gave me *this,* after all."

Hayoon flinched, and Jimin could see just how hard her nails were digging into her palms, her face drained of color as her legs wobbled.

"I memorized my little cage inside and out," Jimin continued, clicking the USB open and closed, open and closed. "Every speck of dust, every fold in every paper, every speck on the walls. I know Minwo's house better than I know myself."

"And so of course I spent too much time staring at the pictures he'd hung on his living room wall. Pictures of him with his parents, graduating college, working at GCF. And pictures with what I knew must've been his old girlfriend."

Hayoon visibly swayed, and something in Jimin wanted to reach out and hold her with how unsteady she looked.

"Out of the twenty two pictures on the wall, fifteen were of this woman. It was years ago, I could tell by how much younger Minwo looked, and this woman had a different hair color in almost every picture. Younger, too. So I didn't recognize you at first… nobody would. Jungkook didn't

the two times he saw them."

Hayoon finally dropped to her knees, the darkness of the park engulfing the two of them as she cried, struggling in breaths, cupping her palms over her face to hide her tears. "I'm sorry… I- I'm so-"

"No," Jimin cut her off, shaking his head, repressing every ounce of viciousness he wished to lash out with. Teeth clattering from it, the rage. "You don't get to *apologize.* You get to *explain."*

Hayoon was shaking, shaking her head, desperately pleading for a way out of this, for a way to remain silent. But Jimin felt cruel tonight: he'd lost everything in one swift blow, and it was partly this woman's fault.

"Why?" Jimin felt tears prick at his eyes, angry and hot and so, so hurt. "Why would you keep that a secret? Why would you do this to Jungkook? You *dated* Minwo, and it's your sister-"

"I know!" Hayoon snapped, tears streaming down her face in rivulets, what little of her makeup she'd worn that day smudging and streaked. And in her eyes was something terribly broken, something Jimin felt… something he understood.

"This is all my fault," Hayoon gasped out. "Don't you think I know that?"

"Do you?" Jimin almost sneered. "Because it's been over a year since Jungkook was arrested for this, and if I understand correctly, you were against him in the beginning. You took Minwo's side."

Hayoon shook her head, over and over. "You don't understand. You don't-"

"Then make me understand!" Jimin screamed, standing from the bench, tears finally blurring his vision. "Tell me what the fuck is going on! Tell me why you did this!"

Hayoon was trembling and gasping, hunching down, flinching into herself. Hands curled in front of her face as if she was expecting a hit, and

and

and

Jimin understood.

He understood now.

He would always understand this.

And he couldn't stomach it, how she was reeled back, eyes shut tight beneath her hands, jaw clenched as she angled her head away from him. Because that had been Jimin just months ago. That had been him, and this was her, too.

Jimin dropped down onto his knees in front of her, suddenly light headed, everything swirling and turning inside-out and outside-in.

He understood.

He understood, so he carefully reached out. Took her hands in his, heart jumping to his throat as she flinched again, a primal sort of terror threaded through the air between them. Took her hands and pried them away from her face, pulling them down between them so that he could look into her eyes.

It was a moment before she finally opened her eyes, until she finally gazed back at him. A moment too long before the tremors in her body eased and her hands unlocked, blood finally flowing through her knuckles. And they were just looking at each other.

Eyes meeting eyes, tentative souls reaching an understanding as the barest wisps of morning reached out from the east, hinting at a sun's existence.

"I'm sorry," Hayoon whispered again. "I'm sorry."

Jimin nodded once, a simple dip of his chin, the USB forgotten on the ground next to them.

"I wasn't… I mean, he… I was…" She blinked, more tears trailing down her face, splashing heavy drops onto their connected hands. "Four years."

Jimin didn't say anything, just watching her.

"Four years," she cried. "Four years of… of Him."

And Jimin couldn't even imagine.

He'd only been with Minwo for two years, and that'd ruined him. Had torn him apart so thoroughly that Jimin couldn't even imagine what four years must've been like.

"I didn't… part of me didn't think… I mean, Minwo wasn't there when my sister was… but I guess, I guess as soon as I met Jungkook… I knew it had to have been Minwo." Hayoon's phone buzzed on the ground beside them, but neither of them paid any attention to it. "But I couldn't… I couldn't s… speak."

Jimin knew this, too. Understood it just as well as the way she'd been cowering just moments before.

"So I thought… I thought if Minwo really had this… this boyfriend Jungkook had told me about, and if Minwo was doing what he did… what he did to me… I knew it would be enough evidence. It would be enough to turn the police away from Jungkook to look at Minwo…"

Nausea permeated through Jimin's stomach, throat heavy and thick as he swallowed.

"And so Jungkook… Jungkook filmed… filmed him… fil… med… he filmed Minwo hur… hurting you…" Hayoon was everywhere, eyes darting from Jimin to their hands to Jimin to their hands to her phone to the park bench, teeth clattering as shivers spread through their fingertips. "And I saw…"

Jimin waited for her to continue, but her mouth opened and closed, opened and closed, a keening cry falling from her lips as she leaned forward, clinging to Jimin's shoulders as her body shook with sobs. Weeping, weeping as she buried her face in Jimin's chest.

Pain, Jimin felt her pain, felt as it choked him, smothering the woman in his arms. So Jimin held her, held her and let her cry, trying to numb everything he himself was feeling, at least for now. Held her and held her, until the world was muted with dull, barely there morning light. Until the chirping and chattering of birds bit through the silence. Until the rain started sprinkling once more, just light enough to tap Jimin's nose, his hands, his neck every now and then.

And then Hayoon was prying herself away from Jimin's embrace, and Jimin saw that twisted, haunted brokenness once more.

“He hurt you,” her voice came, small and scratched. “He hurt you like he hurt me.” Her shaking hand slowly came up, fingertips brushing across Jimin’s cheekbone. And he knew, knew she saw the ghost of bruises, saw them painted across his skin. “He hurt us both, and I realized…” She sucked in a deep breath, a cloying guilt came cracking through her irises. “I realized it was all my fault.”

“Because he’s… he’s more than a… he’s more than a monster. And I knew that. I had the words… the proof… anything that would’ve been needed to lock him away. But I didn’t *speak.* I’ve never *spoken,* and he moved on from me when I finally left him for good. He moved on from me, and he moved on to *you.* And then he… and then he did all of this, and he hurt my… he hurt my sister and he’s hurt *so many people* and all of this is *my fault!”*

Hayoon was near hysterical, the hand Jimin still had ahold of now gripped so tightly it’d gone numb.

“It’s my fucking fault, and I’ve tried- I’ve tried to- I’ve tried to speak, but I can’t speak, and I’m a fucking coward because I’ve tried so many times to- I’ve tried but I’m just a *fucking failure* and I’ve hurt so many people-”

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

“I’ve hurt so many people, I’ve hurt so many people and now Jungkook is going to go to jail and my sister is going to die and Minwo can do whatever he wants and *it’s all my fault!”* Hayoon screamed.

a kaleidoscope of fractures, twisting out of their dimension

Jimin couldn’t find anything to say, and it seemed Hayoon couldn’t either. She was breathing hard, tears falling and falling, and neither of them knew what to say.

an interconnecting constellation of bruises and desperation

Because, after all, they were one and the same, one and the same. Because their souls were bruised, bruised and beaten and smashed. Smashed to bits, smashed apart.

and two caged birds

“He did it because of me,” Hayoon whispered after a long while, haunted and crushed up. “He saw my sister as the one that took me away from him.”

Jimin couldn’t help but ask why. Didn’t know what else he could say, except to follow along with this script, this narrative. Follow the path of words right through to the story being laid out at his feet.

“Jimin,” Hayoon started, mouth opening and closing. Words, words stitched to the tip of her tongue by years of silence. Jimin could see them, those cruel, cutting, vicious stitches. He’d tasted them his whole life. “Escape… you escaped, right? You… you walked away…”

Stomach, stomach firing with nausea, throat coated and tight. Remembered those three weeks of hell that’d finally pushed him into leaving.

“Walked away?”

Glassy, everything around him was made of glass. And he was tumbling between the panes of his kaleidoscope, boulders of color and non-colors smashing into him. Crushed between realms, one of

day and one of night. Smothered in fractures, he was smothered in fractures and this person in front of him had been in this same space, too. Was still here, stuck in this twisting, turning field of horror.

“The video…” Jimin swallowed hard. “That night, he… he was angry. And he did things… he did things over the- the next three w-eeks that…”

By the look on Hayoon’s face, Jimin could see she understood what he wanted to say. What hidden story was stitched to his own tongue. Could see that he hadn’t simply gotten up and walked, though that may have been what it’d looked like.

And then Hayoon was trying to say something, trying desperately to get those damned words off her tongue and into the air. But she couldn’t, Jimin could tell just by the look in her eyes. It was the same thing he’d seen in the mirror for the past months.

But he wasn’t expected her to grab his wrist. Wasn’t expecting her to guide his hand to her forearm, to the material of that same red jacket she’d always worn. And Jimin was confused, confused because he didn’t know what he was supposed to be realizing. Confused because he didn’t understand what this was.

And then she was looking down, down at her arm and Jimin was looking, now, too. Watched as she guided his fingertips up the butt of her palm and beneath the cuff of her sleeve and

and

and he felt

he felt it

An irregularity. Bumpy and ridged up, felt like a thick, raised line across her wrist. Stomach burned fiercer with coiling nausea as his eyes flashed up to meet Hayoon’s.

Smile, sad smile. Her pretty face, Jimin could see those shadows, see how they stayed with her. And he himself had been to that same point once and he understood he understood he understood he understood

he fucking understood

“I couldn’t take it anymore,” Hayoon’s voice was quiet through that sad, broken, wobbly smile. “And when he found me, he stitched me up himself because he didn’t want to take me to the hospital.”

Broken bones, cut up, bruised so badly he couldn’t even move… Jimin recalled begging Minwo on the precipice of unconsciousness to take him to the hospital. But he never could, had always told Jimin nobody could find out about them. That if he did, their relationship would be over. And at that time, that one fact had kept Jimin from ever arguing to be taken to the hospital again.

“It took two days. I’m sure I died at some point… I’m sure I must have… But eventually he gave in. He… he drove… he drove me to the hospital and,” Hayoon blinked, tears flooding down her cheeks. “And he dumped me in the parking lot to be found.”

“He told me he’d come back for me. He told me… he told me not to say a word. That if I even mentioned his name, he’d kill me and then… and then every doctor or nurse that’d heard. And he said he’d get away with it, too… I believed him. I still believe those words. And so when I was… found… when I was found, when they treated me and began asking questions… I told them I’d

done everything to myself. That the bruises and… and the mishealed bones… and everything else was all me."

"So they put me in the psychiatric ward. Kept me there for weeks, wouldn't let me leave. Not until they said I was stable, until I would tell them what my name was and let them contact my family. But I was afraid… I was terrified… so I stayed there… I stayed there in that damn white gown, and I took all the pills they put on my tray, and I had sessions with a therapist."

"And for the first time…" Hayoon took a deep, shuddering breath, that wobbly smile still playing on her lips. "For the first time, I felt safe. I felt like I could sleep at night without waking up to Him beating me. I felt like nothing could get to me, like I could stay there forever and nobody would ever hurt me again. So I refused to tell them anything. I did things that concerned the hospital staff enough to keep me there…"

"But he found me." Hayoon's voice wavered, eyes half-crazed with terror, the birds chattering around them the only thing keeping the two of them anchored to the right dimension. "He snuck in somehow… pulled some strings to get in. And he was just watching me… he didn't say anything… he didn't say anything at all. Just watched me."

Mind games, mind games. Jimin knew those mind games well. He knew them enough that he could see Minwo's black eyes in his head, staring down at the two of them.

"He was going to kill me," Hayoon said, eyes hollowed out and red with tears. "I know he was, but… but then she came in. She didn't know it, but she saved me… The hospital had finally figured out who I was and contacted my sister because she was my emergency contact for a job I'd had 3 years previous. She foiled his plan, and he left the room without a word…"

Hayoon was quiet for a while, the both of them kneeling on the ground, Jimin's fingertips still grazing that scar. So Jimin made the first move, pulling them both up to sit on the bench once more, his knees pulsing and aching, knowing hers must be as well. Heard the buzz of her phone ringing again.

The kaleidoscope was still. No longer twisting and turning. The distortions of the world around them were no longer crashing and swinging. Settled, everything settled into a set pattern.

obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx

"Don't hate him."

Jimin's brows shot up, immediately thinking she was talking about Minwo. And he couldn't, he couldn't understand why she would say this now, after everything she'd told him and he was-

"Jungkook." Hayoon cleared her throat, swiping the back of her hand over her cheek to wipe away some tears. "Don't hate him… he has a big heart. It was… it was all me. I… It was me that manipulated him into taking that video. I took… I took advantage of his… his hurt, thinking it would help everyone in the end. So don't hate him… hate *me."*

Jimin couldn't do anything but shake his head, heart wrung and twisted and full of too much hurt to contain anymore. "I don't hate either of you."

"You should."

"I don't."

"But you *should.* You should despise me."

“I don’t.”

Creaking, cylinders rotating within each other as the kaleidoscope slowly started turning once more.

“Can we… can we talk some more?” Jimin asked, still gently gripping her wrist.

Hayoon was frozen for a moment before she nodded meekly, black hair shimmering in the dozing light of morning.

Yellow-white light shimmered through a vaguely familiar room, everything bleary and blurry and smudged with a swollen, sleepy haze. Jungkook groaned, reaching up to rub at his eyes. Sore, eyes and face sore, head pulsing with pain.

It didn’t take long for him to remember what had happened the night before. What he’d confessed, the way Jimin had broken apart right in front of him, the rain smothering everything like a cliche movie scene, wrapped in hissing ash and cinders.

He remembered it all, and he drowned himself in it, not bothering to fight, to swim. Didn’t deserve to fight. Didn’t deserve to swim. So he sank. Sank and sank, deep into the darkness Fate had slowly be choking him with. Because he couldn’t get Jimin’s eyes out of his head, couldn’t understand

But even though he remembered it, even though he was choking on dark water, he didn’t *understand.*

Didn’t understand why Jimin had held his hand so gently the night before. Why he’d tucked Jungkook into his own bed. Kissed Jungkook’s forehead. Hadn’t kicked Jungkook back out into the rain, screamed at him, wished him dead.

He didn’t understand any of this.

Jungkook slowly turned his head to the side, taking in the rest of the morning-lit room. Hadn’t realized he wasn’t alone until he saw the four other people in the room with him.

His hyungs, all of them, sleeping propped up against the walls or with their heads on the end of the mattress. Surrounded him like silent guardians, protecting him from whatever they could. And Jungkook didn’t have to think long to figure out how or why his hyungs were here.

Soft touch, fingers threading gently through his hair, brushing his bangs from his eyes. Jungkook blinked at Tae, realizing the 95’er had slept next to him the night before, holding him. And Jungkook didn’t hesitate before he leaned forward, burying his face in Tae’s chest, hiding from the world for a little longer.

Jungkook didn’t know how long he laid there, Tae holding him and telling him everything was okay, smoothing a comforting hand through his hair. Didn’t know how long, just knew he could hear his other hyungs gradually waking up.

“There’s seriously nothing here to eat,” Jin complained a little too loudly. “Wah, this kid. He worries me too much.”

“Jiminie’s a brat like that… when we lived together in Incheon, he was like this, too. Always forgetting to eat.”

“I brought him food the other night,” there was the sound of a fridge opening. “And he hasn’t touched any of the leftovers.”

“He’s… he just forgets stuff like that.”

“You know, the first time I met him, I threatened to tie him to a chair if he didn’t stay and eat. I might have to make good on that promise.”

Hoseok’s laugh was light and full of mirth, and Jungkook clung to the sound of his hyungs talking. Clung to the normalcy of it, the familiarity of waking up so many times to things just like that: the clanking of dishes, water running, the sizzle of meat being cooked for breakfast.

“I’m going to go to the store real quick. Do you want anything in particular for breakfast?”

“No, just whatever you guys usually eat. Probably something Jungkook likes the most.”

“Call me when Jungkookie wakes up,” Jin whispered, so quietly Jungkook had to strain to listen. “Please… call me right away? I want to know if he’s…”

“I will. I’ll call you, hyung. Now get going. You might make it back before he wakes up.”

There was no more talking after that. Just the continued sizzle of the frying pan, the smell of bacon wafting through the air, Hoseok quietly humming a tune beneath his breath. And Jungkook still clung to Tae, begging his best friend to let him stay in the confines of such a normal moment for a little while longer.

And Tae did, just held him. Eventually heard Yoongi’s low rumble of a voice, muffled by a few yawns. Heard steps into the kitchen and what must’ve been a tiny peck on the cheek. And Jungkook clung to Tae even harder, darkness pooling all around him, fingers digging into his best friend’s chest as he fought off the rising panic that’d eased him to sleep the night before.

“Jungkook-ah,” came the barest hint of a whisper, so quiet Jungkook could barely catch whisps of it in his ear. “It’s okay. Hyung is here for you.”

and no, no, no

Jungkook didn’t, he didn’t think he could handle this. Handle being held and loved and coddled, not after he’d ruined everything. So he was already pushing, already pushing away, frantically thinking and thinking, drowning and drowning.

But Tae was brushing his fingers through Jungkook’s hair, smoothing his bangs away from his forehead, gazing at him with such love, such pain. And Jungkook was caught, caught and he stopped struggling, melting into his best friend’s embrace.

“Is he awake?” Came Yoongi’s hesitant, whispered voice.

Jungkook felt Tae shake his head, and he was relieved. He was relieved because he didn’t want to leave this moment just yet - he couldn’t. So he was suspended in time for a little bit longer, suspended and hanging and waiting for life to continue.

Only came to when the front door opened, the rustling of shopping bags and Jin’s voice filling the kitchen, Hoseok and Yoongi milling about to help prepare breakfast.

And when breakfast was ready, when he heard three sets of footsteps echoing into the room, he finally pushed himself to get up. And he was pulled into embraces, face cupped with such gentle care, hair ruffled as he was offered breakfast.

So he ate. Ate breakfast with his hyungs, his clock ticking down, down, down. So he ate with them and tried to smile for them, the hollowness in his chest finally expanding enough to suffocate his soul.

But he was grateful for them. For Taehyung, for holding him not just this night but every night he'd ever needed to be held, held and comforted from the throws of nightmares. For being his friend through the best and the worst, through all Jungkook had been through.

He was grateful for Yoongi. For his concerned tones, for his masked comforts and subtle advices. Was grateful for keeping him from spiralling even further down wrong paths, for making sure Jungkook remained responsible for his actions. Was grateful to have had such an honest, blunt hyung that truly cared for him.

He was grateful for Hoseok, for the late night dance lessons and fun trips and good meals. Was grateful for all the times Hoseok had ruffled his hair or pinched his cheeks or cooed at him, despite how Jungkook had always complained. Was happy to have had such a flamboyant person to teach him and take care of Yoongi, too.

And Jin… Jungkook thought that deep down he was most thankful for his Jin-hyung. For the young man that'd taken him in all those years ago when it'd just been Jungkook alone in the massive city of Seoul. Because without Jin, he wouldn't have found this family of his. He wouldn't have laughed nearly as much, or played so hard, or worked so persistently towards his goals, his dreams.

Taehyung and Yoongi and Hoseok and Jin, they were his family. And as they sat on the mattress in Jimin's empty apartment, eating bacon and Korean pancakes, he felt he could offer this world one last smile.

And he was grateful that these would be the memories he kept with him, the memories he would be able to look back upon while in prison. And maybe, maybe he wouldn't see them again.

Maybe he would never see Taehyung with his tongue stuck out while he focused too hard on painting. Maybe he would never see Yoongi with his cup of coffee and grumblings in the early mornings or Hoseok with his *bah's* and *pah's* while teaching dance moves, or Jin cooking something new for dinner while threatening people with a spatula.

Maybe he would never see them again, but at least now… at least now he felt like he could say goodbye. And perhaps it was because his heart was shredded apart, or because the sun was a pale dot in the vast darkness of the murky waters he was sinking in, but he knew now that he'd had a good life with these hyungs.

So he would bask in Tae's warmth and Yoongi's masked comforts, Hoseok's pillars of support and his Jin-hyung's unfaltering familiarity and playfulness. And then he would be okay with saying goodbye...

And he didn't know where Jimin was… he didn't think he deserved to even ask, but he knew he would think of Jimin most of all. Jimin with his blinding smiles and angelic giggles, with his pouts and french fries and midnight walks through Seoul. And it hurt, hurt to know he might very well never see Jimin again… but he was grateful for Jimin. For Jimin's soft heart and caring hands, his sweet kisses and the happy glitter in his ocean eyes.

But Jungkook had taken enough already. Had been greedy for months now, and it was finally time to pay up, to let Jimin go free. To let his hyungs go free, to let everything go. It was time to stop hurting everyone, hurting himself.

So Jungkook let his heart fail, let it fail and drown as he finally gave up completely, sinking into an abyss of obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx.

And the next day he was arrested.

Chapter End Notes

thoughts? feelings? predictions?
thanks for reading! even if i don't respond to comments right now (i'm very sorry... i'm a team leader for a program in mexico right now so i'm extremely busy...) they make my entire day. i love, love, love reading them.
(ps sorry for typos/grammar. i haven't had time to proofread..)

just let me fall

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jungkook was in his bed.

Fingertips, fingertips curling across the white sheets, bright afternoon light breaking through his mind, illuminating the dust glittering in the air. A drop of sun plastered over Jungkook's eye as the clouds outside moved and shifted with the passing day.

And the intense brightness in his eye, he didn't mind it. Knew it was just illuminating the non-colors of his eyes. Knew it didn't matter how much light touched him - it was too late now. Too late, too late. And yet his hyungs didn't seem to understand that. Were staying glued to his side like they usually did, supporting him with home-cooked meals and cuddling and murmured words of concern Jungkook could just barely hear from down the hall.

They didn't understand. Didn't understand that this was the end. He'd lived his story, had tasted life and laughter and love. Had been broken and put together and broken again. They didn't understand that he'd said his goodbyes, that it was time for him to just go, to end this madness and just give the courts what they wanted.

He'd already said as much to his lawyers, who had tried their best to persuade him otherwise without outright telling him what to do. And Namjoon, Namjoon had been so furious when Jungkook had told his lawyers he was giving up.

"Jungkook-ah, what… what are you doing?" Namjoon hissed, pulling Jungkook out of the conference room. "What are you doing?"

Jungkook just shrugged, everything around him coated in grey stripes of lethargy and smoke. "Does it matter anymore?"

Namjoon was shaking his head, scrubbing hands through his hair over and over, tugging at the faded brown strands. "No, no. Jungkook… you can't give up now. Not right now. Just… just hold on for a little longer." Namjoon gripped Jungkook's shoulder, a desperate glint in his eyes. "Just a few more days. Please. That's all. A few more days."

Jungkook couldn't muster enough energy to react, not caring that Namjoon's grip on his shoulders kept getting a little tighter the longer Jungkook remained silent.

"Jungkook-ah… you can't… why? Why now? You've fought so… you've fought so hard for so long. Why are you giving up now?"

Jungkook honestly tried to think about it, think about why he was giving up. Why he refused to fight any longer. But it was too much. Thinking, thinking was too much. Head too crowded, crowded with darkness and obsidian and onyx, and all the other non-colors starting to register in his mind.

"Jungkook," Namjoon shook Jungkook's shoulders. "Look at me. You need to look at me. Stop - stop looking into nowhere."

Jungkook wanted to laugh.

"Stop it!" Namjoon almost cried, tears welling in his eyes. "Please just… stop. You can't give up.

You need to go back in there… you need to go back in there-"

"And do what?" Jungkook finally snapped, a sudden rush of anger hitting him, slamming through his veins. "And do what, *hyung?" Namjoon blinked, surprised as a tear finally slid down his face. "You have… you have* no fucking right *to tell me I shouldn't give up. Ever since this whole thing started, it's like you've disappeared. I've only talked to you… actually* talked *to you, like five times in the past year!"*

Namjoon flinched, a swelling swelling swelling of non-words coating the air between them. Warning, a desperate warning in his hyungs eyes that Jungkook just couldn't understand, no matter how long he looked.

"You just… left me, hyung. Where have you even been?" Namjoon looked like he wanted to answer, but didn't; he wouldn't say a word. Jungkook ripped his hyung's hands from his shoulders, nudging away, walking back towards the conference room.

"It's over, hyung. It's over."

A few steps, a few steps. And Jungkook, he was almost in the conference rooms, catching sight of a few of his lawyers huddled over a stack of papers. Was forcefully yanked back, wrist caught in Namjoon's shaking hand before he could get too far.

"This winter… it will be over soon."

Jungkook finally felt the hot sting of tears in his eyes, shaking his head furiously as he struggled to tug his wrist away. "No. Just stop."

"Jungkook-ah, please. Remember what I told you, what I've always told you. We're… we're passing by the edge of this cold winter… unt-"

"Until the days of spring," Jungkook cut in, finally twisting his arm to get away. "Hyung, look around you. Spring has passed. It's over. It's the height of Summer, and now comes the Fall."

Jungkook didn't give Namjoon a chance to say anything more, not caring that his hyung now had tears freely streaming down his face. He didn't care, didn't care. It was all over anyways, and the last good memory Jungkook had with Namjoon was too long ago, and filled with nothing but loneliness.

"Just let me fall."

Jimin didn't bother walking back to his apartment. He knew Jungkook wouldn't be there, that the hyungs would've taken him back to their home. And so Jimin was walking, walking half way across Seoul to get back to Jungkook's house.

And his mind, his mind refused to ponder anything but what had happened in the last 24 hours. What had been said and done and revealed. And so he was caught, caught in words and colors and everything that was too real.

Caught, caught, caught.

And he was finally turning down Jungkook's street, heavy afternoon heat bearing down on him, sweat coating his body like a cold glove. And he saw the house, and couldn't help but run. Run,

run home. Home to Jungkook and Taehyung and Yoongi and Jin, hoping Hoseok would be there, too.

Too much, Jimin was carrying too much. Could feel spindling bones cracking and grabbing at his ankles, dragging him under. But Jimin fought, fought against it and ran. Ran down the street, flashes of snow flooding his mind. Ran down the street and up the driveway, bounding up the steps to the front door.

Fought and screamed and kicked against those chains of bone, against the darkness dredging up in the cracks and recesses of his mind. He fought and fought, and then he knocked on the door.

And Jimin could feel it, feel the sorrow embedded into the very foundations of the home. Could feel it seep through his hand and into his arms, could feel as it choked and choked at him, everything grabbing all at once. Bone and sorrow, sorrow and bone.

And then the door opened, and Jimin just had to look into Taehyung's devastated eyes once before pushing past him into the house. Pushed past him and he'd never run so fast in his life, run up to Jungkook's room, taking the stairs 3 at a time.

The room, Jungkook's room with the door slightly ajar, glowed with a heavy melancholy that halted Jimin in his tracks. Was slammed into a wall, a wall of heartache and grief and nothingness. And Jimin was terrified, everything screaming at him to run, run, run. Run away from this hurt, this anguish, and never look back.

Jimin pushed the door open, the tiny squeak of the hinges grating against his eardrums. And Jimin couldn't bear the sight in front of him. Because… because Jungkook was slumped over the bed, body positioned like a thrown ragdoll. And he was hollowed out, a hollowed out shell, echoing nothing but pain. Pain, pain was radiating off of Jungkook in waves, intertwined with nothingness.

"He won't say anything," came the soft, low timber of Yoongi's whisper.

Jimin didn't have to look to know that Yoongi was standing right behind him. Didn't have to look to know Yoongi had been crying. Could hear it in his voice and smell it in the air, the reek of sadness.

Jimin didn't say anything, and Yoongi didn't either. And Jimin stepped further into the room as he shoved a breath out of his lungs, pulling air back in, trying to remind himself to breathe. Didn't flinch when the soft squeak of the hinges sounded and he knew that Yoongi had closed the door. A silent way of saying Jimin was the only thing left they hadn't tried.

this

this was not a moment for words

because words

words would never be enough

not for something like this

And so Jimin didn't think, didn't think as his legs guided him to the bed, thighs touching the mattress. Didn't even think as he lowered himself down onto the sheets as gently as possibly, sliding over to Jungkook's side. And Jimin laid down behind him, body almost fit to the curve of Jungkook's back, legs almost touching but not quite.

And Jimin felt the hurt, felt it not just from Jungkook, but from deep within himself as well. Mind flashed with images from the night of the video, with Jungkook's determined gaze and potent worry and fiery rage.

And then his sight focused on the back of Jungkook's head, the lifelessness with which he laid there.

The slump of Jungkook's shoulders, the barely-there rise and fall of shallow breaths.

And Jimin decided that for now, he didn't fucking care. He didn't care what Jungkook had done, and he didn't care how much it had hurt. Hadn't forgiven Jungkook yet, but… he didn't care for now. Because this, this hurt *so much more.* This, this couldn't be fixed with time, and Jimin was again faced with the knowledge he had and the words he could speak.

And Jimin threaded his fingers through Jungkook's black locks. Felt the soft, thick strands between his fingers as he brushed Jungkook's hair down until it was smooth. Ignored the skip in his heart when Jungkook's breath hitched, shoulders tensing from their ragdoll state.

And Jimin buried his face in Jungkook's back, hand slipping down to Jungkook's arm, then under. Snaking around his waist as Jimin pulled them flush together. And he could feel Jungkook's ribs, the little ridges of bone protruding a little too much. Could feel how Jungkook hadn't been eating, was barely breathing, and Jimin hated himself again.

Hated himself for being such a coward, for letting Jungkook get to this point. Because Jimin should've just been able to shove all his… all his own pains and terrors and nightmares aside. Should've been strong enough to keep himself from drowning as he fought Minwo's obsidian gaze inside his head.

Should've been able to get past the midnight beatings and morning rapes and Minwo's fingers down his throat to control his weight. Should've been able to get through all of that and focus more on Jungkook, and maybe then Jungkook wouldn't be as broken as he is right now.

Should've been able to go into that damn police station the thousand times he'd stood in front of it the last few weeks. Should've been able to just go in there and spill every dark, wrenching thing about himself to people who would most likely not even believe him.

should've should've should've

But he hadn't, he hadn't and now Jungkook had given up. Given up, and it was Jimin's fault.

"Has this all been a dream?" Jungkook's smothered voice filtered through the air.

Jimin nuzzled his nose into the back of Jungkook's neck, tightening his hold around the maknae's middle. Couldn't, couldn't force himself to say anything, to offer any of the words he knew Jungkook might need to hear. He couldn't speak, not right now.

"It feels like… it feels like a dream."

Jimin's hold on Jungkook tightened, holding onto his anchor, his world. This was the person that'd kept him from falling into the abyss of despair and bone and whatever the fuck else was in his head. This was the person that'd brought him a glass of water every single night, staying with him when he hadn't even known Jimin was terrified of being alone. This was the person, this was the person, this was the person that Jimin loved.

Jimin pulled back a little, propping himself up on his elbow as he planted kisses along the line of

Jungkook's shoulder, the slope of his neck, tears dripping down his face. Only then realizing something white was pressed into Jungkook's palm, fingers curled loosely over it.

Jimin slowly moved the hand that was pressed to Jungkook's ribs up, sliding along the mattress until he cupped Jungkook's hand in his own. Gently, ever so gently reached beneath Jungkook's palm and pried the crumpled piece of paper from his loose grip.

Unfolded it the best he could with one hand, stomach dropping with each corner he unfurled.

And Jimin remembered this piece of paper.

He remembered being dragged by his collar and thrown down the stairs, remembered bruising grips and the sudden switch of kind eyes as Minwo tied his shoes. He remembered snowy streets and a monster guiding him to the steps of a house. He remembered a door opening, world flooding with a sudden burst of warmth and light, and a looming figure standing above him.

He remembered the sliver of hurt in Jungkook's eyes before it was quickly masked by a cold hatred. How Jungkook had let him in a given him a place to sleep, and then the morning he'd met all of his hyungs, only wanting to run away.

And from there, Jimin remembered everything else. The before's and after's. The frozen moments and the time that flew by too quickly and everything in between that had led them to this very frame in the story.

"It reminds me that everything is real," Jungkook continued to murmur, Jimin able to see the dark smudges beneath his eyes, the white palor to his usually glowing, tan skin. "And because everything is real, there's no use anymore."

Jimin hooked his chin over Jungkook's shoulder, still carefully holding the piece of paper.

"I took a plea deal this morning."

Jimin soul dropped, dropped and dropped, falling.

"The police should be arresting me soon."

Jimin's arm tightened around Jungkook's waist, shaking his head, shaking his head, shaking his head. And tears, tears were such an inconsequential thing. Such damning little cracks forming in his foundation, every drop eating away at the pillars that kept him up.

"No," Jimin finally breathed out, holding Jungkook too tightly.

Jungkook's hand slowly glided over, his ice cold palm cupping over Jimin's hand. "It's all I have left to do."

Jimin shook his head, fingers clenching around the thin material of Jungkook's T-shirt. "No." Jungkook loosed a breath, Jimin feeling the rise and fall, the shuddering of air being forced in and out of lungs. "You're not done, Jungkook. You're not done."

Jungkook didn't say anything, and Jimin finally pried himself away, sitting up and climbing over Jungkook to lay on the other side of him, faces mere inches apart. Jimin cupped Jungkook's face, hating the numbness in his eyes. The little spines of terror cracking through his gaze the longer Jimin looked.

Jimin brushed a thumb over Jungkook's cheek, seeing his own reflection in the deep pools of the

doe eyes staring back at him. And Jimin was filled, filled to the brim. Brimming with a sudden rage, a determination he'd felt time and time again in front of the police station, trying to work up the courage to go inside.

"Listen to me."

Jungkook didn't even blink, eyes locked with Jimin's, terror permeating through everything in the room as Jimin's heart beat like crazy.

"You listen to me, Jeon Jungkook." Jimin leaned in so close their noses touched, Jungkook's eyes going wide. "If you give up now, I'll give up, too. I'll give up just like you're doing."

Jungkook's brow furrowed, a little scowl overtaking his weary features. "You can't-"

"I can. And I will. I'll just give the fuck up, because that's exactly what you're doing."

Jungkook tried to shake his head, tried to push away a little as his scowl deepened into a deadly glare. "No. You're not giving up, Jimin. You've come too far for that. You've finally stopped having nightmares every night, and you can eat again, and you… you…"

Jimin raised a brow as he threaded his fingers through Jungkook's hair over and over again, smoothing it away from his forehead. "If I'm not giving up, then you shouldn't either."

Jungkook was blinking, blinking and blinking as tears finally shimmered in those beautiful, round eyes. Mouth a wobbly line, looking crestfallen and ashamed and broken, and Jimin gathered Jungkook into his arms, feeling as he began to hiccup with shallow sobs.

"Oh, Jungkookie," Jimin murmured, planting a kiss on top of his head as Jungkook buried his face in Jimin's chest. "You don't deserve any of this"

your fault

your fault

your fault

Jimin sucked in a harsh breath, resisting the urge to cry anymore. He'd cried enough. He'd hurt enough. He could hurt more later. But Jungkook didn't have that luxury, and Jimin had had enough of all this pain.

He'd had enough.

"Jungkook," Jimin pulled back, cupping Jungkook precious face in his hands. Leaned forward and planted a kiss on his nose, tasting the salt of his tears. "Jungkook, do you remember what you told me that first night you brought me a glass of water?"

Jungkook didn't answer, eyes closed, more tears slipping away from beneath his lashes.

"You told me… you told me it's okay to hurt."

Jungkook just shut his eyes harder, Jimin trying to brush away the tears as the fell.

"And you know what I did?"

Jungkook shook his head just a fraction.

“I let myself hurt.” Jimin planted another kiss on Jungkook’s forehead. “And I know you’re hurting, Jungkook. I know you’ve given up, and that you feel like this is the end… but it’s not.”

Jungkook’s eyes finally cracked open just a sliver, earthy pearls webbed with complete devastation. “I hurt you, though.” Jungkook’s pale, shaking hand came up, weakly grabbing at Jimin’s hands on his face. “I filmed you… I was… I was going to use your trauma… use your trauma for my own personal gain. That’s not… that’s not forgivable.”

Jimin kissed Jungkook’s thumb, a whirl of pain dredging up inside his ribcage. “It did hurt… but Jungkook… that doesn’t mean this is the end. And it’s not unforgivable.” Jimin placed his palm over Jungkook’s heart. “Do you know why?” Jungkook shook his head, something besides darkness finally breaking through in his gaze. "Because I *know* you. I know your heart, Jungkook-ah. And I know how hurt you are."

Jungkook was peering at Jimin from beneath his mussed up bangs. Looked at Jimin with that hurting soul, and Jimin saw something he’d never seen before. Because Jungkook was gold, yes. But he was so much more than gold, so much more than pearl or rubies or youth. Jungkook was more than that, worth so much more.

Jungkook was a diamond.

Raw and unprocessed, made from pressure and refined by trial. Jungkook was a pure diamond, and Jimin was just now realizing it. Realizing that no obsidian, no onyx could ever compare, could ever beat something that had been made from the very heart of nature.

“I won't lie and say I've forgiven you yet... but I love you. And I love you too much to let you do this to yourself. And it’s okay to hurt, Jungkook,” Jimin whispered again. “But we’re not giving up.”

---

pound

pound

pound

“Seoul Police! Open the door!”

pounding and pounding and pounding

Jungkook felt nothing.

For the first time in years, Yoongi had tears streaming down his face. And Jungkook watched as his hyung walked to the door, the pounding getting more and more impatient. And Jungkook watched as Yoongi couldn’t couldn’t couldn’t open the door, hand clenched tightly around the knob, a broken sob gritted between his teeth.

Taehyung was holding Jungkook on one side, Jin on the other. Hoseok was right behind Yoongi, trying to tell him they needed to open the door before the situation turned into something worse than just an arrest. And Jimin wasn’t there, had left that afternoon.

The door was finally pried open.

Handcuffs were slapped around Jungkook's wrists.

He blocked out the sound of his hyungs' weeping and walked out the door without looking back.

Jeon Jungkook Arrested for Murder of GCF Assistant

Lee Jisoo was found murdered in her hospital bed early this morning. The nurse assigned to care for Ms. Lee revealed that the assistant had begun talking, regaining awareness just moments before she was smothered with her own pillow.

After intense investigation by the Seoul Police Department, Ex-CEO Jeon Jungkook's DNA was found at the crime scene. All video surveillance for that wing of the hospital was wiped out, just as in the case with Ms. Lee's assault in Jeon's office last year.

Police will release an official statement soon, refusing to give any further details until more investigation can take place. Until then, a funeral will be held this Saturday…

Namjoon couldn't breathe.

Minwo's hands wrapped around his throat as he was slammed into the basement wall over and over again, bruises littering every inch of his body. Blood drenched his nose and mouth and neck, staining his dark blue shirt an ugly brown.

"You know I can fucking hear you!" Minwo screamed, dragging Namjoon from the wall and slamming him down into the ground. Knelt on the monster's chest, Namjoon coughing and sputtering for breath as Minwo dug his knee right into his gut. "Fucker, you know the fucking consequences for something like that."

Namjoon's blurred vision swung and double and spun as Minwo swung his fist into his face over and over, crack after crack of knuckles meeting skin echoing through the basement.

"You really think I don't know what you tried to tell him? You really think I'm that stupid?" Minwo stood up, stomping on Namjoon's rib cage until a sharp snap followed Namjoon's scream. " *Just a few more days, Jungkook! Just a few more days! Winter will be over soon!"*

Namjoon tried to roll away, fire rippling through his lungs as bone poked into his organs. Fingers dug into his shoulder, flipping him back into the ground, pinning him down.

And then Namjoon was looking up into those black eyes, and Minwo was reaching into his coat pocket, pulling out the little black box that meant cold terror.

"I'll fucking push this button in two seconds. I'll push it because you were so stupid."

Namjoon shook, shook his head. "No - no," he wheezed. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I won't say anything."

Minwo slapped him, blood painted over the obsidian giant's hands and arms. "But you did. You said more than enough."

Namjoon was trembling, trembling with pain and pain and *dread dread dread*

Minwo slipped the black box back into his pocket, standing up, a whirlwind of fury as he marched out of the basement gym, not bothering to close the door behind him.

Namjoon was drenched in his own blood, drying sticky and cold on his skin as he struggled to sit up, to reach his destroyed phone that'd been flung against the furthest wall.

He didn't question the punching bag, the dried blood slathered all over the thing. He didn't question any of the stains on the cement or walls. He knew where they were from, and now he would add a few himself. But if he was one step closer to his goal, it was all worth it.

It was worth it.

Jimin looked down at where their hands were entwined, and they took a step forward.

Chapter End Notes

thoughts, feelings, predictions?
<3

(also... if you're going to write paragraphs of pessimism, all it does it bring me down and make me feel terrible. i'm fine with constructive criticism, but negativity has no place here. please keep such pessimistic essays to yourself until the story is over so that i can write without those words plaguing me, and until then I'll delete those comments)
Also, for those who keep saying Jimin testified against Jungkook in court.. did you make that up? I never once said or suggested that. Minwo USED Jimin as his alibi. Alibi is very very different from going into court and testifying.. besides, what would Jimin even be able to use to testify against jungkook? So stop it. God please just stop it I'm getting so fed up with that and I'll just delete you're comment if you keep saying that

spring day

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The moon, it smashed into the sun. Smashed and melded and screamed its way through implosions of self.

and Hayoon

s h a t t e r e d

Pupils mere pinpricks as she scratched at her arms and tore at her hair, blood dripping down her face from raking her nails over her forehead. And the sun, the sun was gone. Gone, and the moon was, too. One couldn't exist without the other, after all.

And Hayoon stared at the remnants of sun splotches over the empty hospital bed. Stared at those blank sheets as she tore herself apart, mind empty, empty of everything except for a crazed, half-mad frenzy of memories.

Memories of blood and bruises and hospitals.

And this was her implosion of self. This was the sun and moon destroying each other. This was her end.

and she

s h a t t e r e d

amongst empty sheets

where her other half used to lay

Jimin wept.

Wept into his arms, shaking and shaking, eyes swollen with heat and tears, aching with salt. Salt and tourmaline, his soul was salt and tourmaline.

Because Jisoo was dead, smothered just moments after she'd begun talking. Killed off in a matter of minutes, the nurse having stepped away for just a second too long. And Jungkook's DNA was all over the body, yet again. No camera footage, yet again. Jungkook framed, yet again.

And Jimin screamed out his sobs, because it was too late.

too late, too late

too fucking late

And after everything, his words were worth nothing.

fucking nothing

Jimin clawed a hand through his hair, tugging at the faded blond strands until his scalp hurt. Curled into the yellow blanket, the mattress on the floor of his apartment smelling faintly of Jungkook. And Jimin wept, desperately clinging to the remnants of anything his love had left behind.

Couldn't stop thinking of Jungkook's mugshots, plastered all over the news. How empty he looked, not a spark left in his eyes.

And Jimin couldn't help but think about the afternoon he'd run away from Minwo. The peak of his desperation. The lowest point of his fucking life. And he remembered trying to run away, only to have Jungkook sweep him down from the fence he was trying to clamber over. Only to have Jungkook sit with him while he broke apart, his hold the only thing keeping Jimin in their realm.

And Jimin remembered a Jungkook that wasn't so hollowed out by the world. He remembered a Jungkook that was full of fight and passion and concern. And Jimin tried to go back in time, tried to kick his mind back into the past, to that day behind the ice cream parlor. Would do anything to curl into Jungkook's embrace just one more time.

It reminds me that everything is real. And because everything is real, there's no use anymore.

And Jimin loved Jungkook so much he hated him. Hated how easily Jungkook had given up, though the more rational part of Jimin's head argued that Jungkook had fought for over a year, that he'd been exhausted long before he'd revealed the USB to Jimin.

But Jimin had never hated someone more, even more than himself… had never hated anyone more than the Jungkook in those mugshots. Hated how Jungkook was in pictures and in the news and not here, not with Jimin or the hyungs or *free* like he should be. Hated this shell of Jungkook that had taken the place of the beautiful soul Jimin had grown to love.

And Jimin loved Jungkook too much to hate him.

But he couldn't even tell him that because Jungkook was gone.

gone

gone like the passing spring

dissolved into a faint memory

reminiscent with winter storms

Splintering knocks thundered at Jimin's front door, and he jumped, sitting up with a gasp as his heart pounded. Thought it might've been the police or detectives again, but as Jimin passed a window looking out onto the street, there were no cars, not even Jungkook's (the police had towed it away for evidence, along with Jungkook's phone and everything in his room at the house, including his computer and a battered camera under the bed).

So Jimin froze, heart caught between his lungs, throat too raw to ask who it was from how much he'd spoken the night before.

More thundering knocks on the door had Jimin struggling to breathe, thinking if it was one of the hyungs they would've spoken up by now. If it was the police, they would've announced themselves. If it was Jungkook-

Jimin rocked on his feet with the smack of reality, everything inside him screaming and wilting,

tourmaline and salt, obsidian and onyx.

Jimin peered through the peephole in the door, unable to see anything but a dark, hunched figure.

“Who is it?” Jimin asked carefully, voice cracking, throat aching with the effort of speaking. “Who is it?” He asked again, a little clearer this time. But the person didn’t say anything, and Jimin watched as they tilted their head up, Jimin finally able to see their face.

And still Namjoon didn’t say anything, holding up a piece of paper with something written on it, something Jimin had to squint to see…

‘Can’t talk. Minwo has me wired, so don’t say anything either. I need your help.’

Jimin’s eyes widened, wondering a plethora of things all at once. Like how Namjoon knew where he lived, and why Minwo had him tapped, and why Namjoon needed his help. They’d never even met before… had never even talked.

Jimin watched Namjoon bring his fist up to the door, knocking again, making Jimin jump a little as he realized he still hadn’t done anything. Hands shook has he unlocked the door. Cracked the door open just a bit, peeking between the gap of the door and the frame, not letting Namjoon in yet.

Namjoon panicked for a moment, doing what Jimin could only describe as charades to tell him not to talk, holding the paper up for Jimin to see once more.

Jimin nodded, making it apparent that he was still skeptical, still not opening the door all the way.

Namjoon motioned to the door, his eyes weary and pained. One of his arms was wrapped over his stomach, still hunched in on himself, wincing as if just the very act of breathing hurt.

Jimin wanted to ask, wanted to pull all of the answers out of Namjoon without letting him in. But the longer Namjoon stood there, the more painful it seemed for him to keep waiting. So Jimin opened the door, a sudden rush of terror thrumming through him, thinking about how Namjoon was wired, that for some reason Minwo could hear everything. Probably even heard the knocks, heard Jimin asking who it was at his door.

Namjoon stepped up into the house, and Jimin just barely had time to react before the other tripped over his own two feet, tumbling forward. Jimin’s arms snapped out, catching Namjoon before he face planted into Jimin’s tile floor.

And then Namjoon screamed.

Jimin let go immediately, mind riddled with shock. Barely registered the fact that he’d let Namjoon hit the ground anyways, only able to focus on the tears in the rapper’s eyes as he bit his tongue, writhing in agony.

Jimin had to clamp his hand over his mouth, remembering just before he spoke that Minwo could be listening. Still, Jimin knelt by Namjoon, hands hovering, unsure of what was going on or what he could even do to help. Perhaps this is what Namjoon needed.

But Namjoon just waved his hands away, face flushed from both pain and embarrassment. “I’m so fucking clumsy,” he muttered, as if talking to himself under his breath. “Damn ribs.”

Jimin’s eyes flitted down to the rapper’s torso, mind suffocating in questions, needing answers. But he waited, waited for Namjoon to regain himself, blushing so hard from embarrassment that Jimin was even more worried for him. But Namjoon politely waved Jimin’s hands away from him,

slowly, painfully pushing himself to sit up.

Sheepish dimples made a reappearance, the dark circles beneath Namjoon's flashing deep purple as he smiled, and it was so hard not to talk. To keep quiet. Lips pursed as he held out a hand and pulled the rapper to his feet.

A few minutes later, with some awkward fumbling and Namjoon putting on some music to make it harder to tell something was up, they were seated at the fold-up kitchen table, plastic chairs creaking gently as Jimin shifted. Wrung his hands together, trying to ignore the fact that Namjoon's eyes were too perceptive, latched onto Jimin's swollen eyes and tear-stained cheeks.

I'm sorry, Namjoon wrote on the little notepad Jimin had managed to supply. It was his budgeting notebook, pages of numbers and groceries and paychecks filled out. But it was all he had. Jimin still didn't have a phone, and looking at the one in Namjoon's hands - a beat up black flip phone that looked eerily familiar - he wouldn't be able to text anyways.

I have a lot of questions, Jimin wrote immediately under Namjoon's apology.

Namjoon nodded, scratching at his scalp, hair messy and unkempt. *I know you do. I'll explain everything I can.*

Jimin tapped his pen against the table, waiting as Namjoon wrote and wrote and wrote, the music playing idly in the background registering as *Spring Day* - one of the rapper's collabs.

Jimin watched Namjoon stop writing several times, pen frozen to the paper, ink bleeding out in splotched spider webs of black. And Jimin refused to read any of those words until Namjoon finally put the pen down, sliding the notebook across the table, breath hitched and face pale.

And these, these were answers.

Jimin's world dropped from beneath his feet as he read what Namjoon had to say.

And by the time he was done, Jimin was ready to drag Minwo's bloody corpse to the very depths of hell.

Pounding knocks, that's all Minwo could hear through the in-ear piece. His brow furrowed, eyes narrowing as he pressed the tiny bud further into his ear, trying to hear more of what his monster was doing.

"This is our projected earnings for the next year," Yugyeom was saying, pointing to a red line on the projector.

Fizzed-out ruffling of clothes, scratched sound of a muffled voice.

Minwo almost growled in annoyance, carefully neutral face nearly breaking as he thumbed at the black box in his pocket. Itched, itching to press it. Urge grew every single day, and he could press the button here and now, here and now.

A scream.

Minwo's eyes snapped open wider, heart thrumming low and snarling in his chest as his attention focused solely on what he was hearing through the ear piece.

“The marketing director will continue…”

I’m so fucking clumsy, Namjoon’s voice crackled through the speaker. *Damn ribs.*

Minwo dug his nails into the flesh of his arms, crossed over his middle as he leaned back in his chair, trying to appear as if he was listening intently to the meeting.

Music, the thrumming chords of a song Minwo had heard one too many times. The song that spoke of his downfall, the hidden warnings Namjoon had so slyly tried to slip into his conversations with Jungkook over the past year. Warnings that had Minwo grinding his teeth, knowing Namjoon was playing that song to irritate him.

Thumb grazed the black button in his pocket, a hit of pleasure surging through him as he thought about how it would just take the press of a finger to destroy everything for not only Namjoon, but Jungkook and even his sweet little Min-ah, as well. He could take everything away, take it all.

But he had only one more thing, one more thing before he could press the button.

“Listen,” Yugyeom’s weary voice demanded Minwo’s attention, seeing that the new CFO was slumped back in his chair, eyes too tired for someone as young as he was. “I know with… with what happened last night, I know a lot of you are thinking of Jungkook. But we can’t… we can’t let this cripple us. We need to be just as strong as Jungkook was and push through this.”

Minwo simmered where he sat, blood boiling as he saw the down-trodden looks, crestfallen and aching and grieving faces surrounding him.

“This was Jungkook’s dream. This was his pride. We can’t…” Yugyeom stole a harsh breath, the room too heavy, too hurt. “He was our friend. Our brother. Our leader. But we can’t change what’s happened… what he may or may not have done. We can’t.”

Minwo wanted to roll his eyes, watching as the people around him seemed to shrink in their chairs. And it was almost funny, Minwo thought, the stench of guilt heavy in the air. It was funny how people only cared when all other options and people had been exhausted, when something was lost that could not be found again.

Passing by the edge of the cold winter

Minwo grit his teeth, fingers digging into the hard wood of his desk.

Until the days of spring

The song was on fucking repeat.

Until the days of flower blossoms

Minwo should’ve cut his ties with Namjoon while he could have. Should’ve buried the little fucker six feet under, somehow found a way to pin it on Jungkook. Cursed himself for not thinking of doing something like that.

Please stay, please stay there a little longer

Blood, blood seeping from beneath his fingernails, pain shooting through his fingers. Had snapped his fingernails up from clawing at the table. But Minwo simply looked at his hand, fascinated by the red, swelling flesh around his broken, bleeding nails. Experimentally dug his fingers into the wood a little more, pain exploding up his arm.

Minwo smiled as the meeting continued, everyone around him sullen and sad.

Jimin folded the paper with shaking hands, tucking it into his pocket. And they sat there in silence.

Namjoon hissed in pain, and Jimin knew now that his ribs were broken, that Minwo had… Minwo had done so many things right under Jimin's nose. And Jimin had been so fucking naive he hadn't seen any of it.

But now, now it was time to do something. If the police wouldn't, then Jimin would.

So Jimin stood from his cheap plastic chair, grabbed ~~his old phone~~Namjoon's phone where it laid on the table, and was out the door in a flash, that familiarly sickening number already ringing through.

This was Jimin's fucking story, and he was finally taking charge of it.

Spring had come.

Jungkook's head was bowed as the police officer opened the door to the white-walled room. Set a cup of coffee on the table in front of him, but Jungkook didn't even bother to look. Didn't even bother, just staring at his own hands. Staring at the hands that had done so much wrong, because Jungkook had killed Jisoo.

He'd killed her.

That had to be it.

Jungkook had killed an innocent woman with his very own hands, and this was his confession.

He'd done it, he'd done it.

It wasn't Minwo, it wasn't anyone else but himself.

And Jungkook's eyes flitted to the center of the table as the policeman pressed the record button.

Namjoon's torso screamed in pain as he tripped over the step just outside the door of his own apartment. Whimpered pitifully as he clawed hands through his hair, biting his lip so hard it bled to keep himself from screaming.

But he didn't go inside.

Sat there where he'd fallen, ashes and all, and felt the world around him burning as the tiniest beeping sound could be heard.

There was no point in running- Namjoon knew this. He just didn't think it'd be tonight that his life would end. But he'd done it, he'd done what he'd needed to, and Minwo knew that now.

So the beeping sped up, a high pitched whine triggering through the air.

The stars were beautiful. A few faded clouds blended into the night sky, a plane's light blinking as it flew through the clouds. And it felt like spring, so beautiful and crisp, promising warming things to come. And the world was so beautiful, so beautiful and Namjoon smiled, twisting the promise ring on his fourth finger.

"I love you, Jin-hyung. I love you," Namjoon murmured, gazing up at the starry heavens before everything around him exploded in a ball of fire.

And Namjoon was no more.

Minwo watched from across the street as his monster burned to death.

Tucked the black box back into his jacket pocket, smile tugging so hard at the corners of his mouth he could barely breathe. And that'd only been one. Only one, and it felt this good.

Minwo pulled out his phone, snapping a few pictures, taking a video to save for later. And that's when he remembered his cute little Min-ah, how he'd sounded, so pretty and confident and naive. Thought about the phone call mere hours ago and he laughed, turning off his phone and tucking it back into his pocket.

He opened his car door, sliding into the driver's seat, ignoring the gagged man in the back seat.

"Oh, Kim Taehyung," Minwo whispered gently, "I forgot you knew Namjoon so well." Minwo saw through the rearview mirror, saw as tears drench the gag in Taehyung's mouth, eyes red and puffy, ugly sobs smothered in fabric. "Don't worry, it won't be too long before you join him, too."

Minwo turned the key, car sputtering to life, and he was on his way as the wail of sirens haunted the street behind them.

Chapter End Notes

i'm back!
what did you think of the chapter?
a little rushed, i know, but the next chapter is where everything explodes (did i mean that literally or figuratively?? hahaha) but please let me know what you think!
thank you!

defiance

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jimin trailed his fingertips over the muscled slope of Jungkook's bare back, morning light wrapping them up in a soft embrace of muted happiness and peace. And Jimin smiled, leaning forward until his forehead touched the warm map of skin in front of him, closing his eyes as he wrapped an arm over Jungkook's slim, toned waist.

Jungkook was a heavy sleeper, and Jimin giggled quietly into his back as he thought of making french fries again just to wake him up. Clung even tighter to the maknae's warmth, smiling and smiling as their legs brushed together, Jungkook unconsciously cuddling back into Jimin.

"I love you," Jimin whispered. "I love you, I love you, I love you," and his heart was bursting.

The yellow blanket was bright and happy, casting a cream-colored, sunny glow over the rest of the room, stark against the crisp white sheets they laid on top of. And Jimin was happy, happy, happy. So happy his heart didn't know how to deal with it, didn't know how to handle this much happiness after so long with nothing but dulled smiles and muted hurt.

Nuzzled his nose over one of Jungkook's shoulder blades, trying to muster enough energy to get up and get ready for work. It was too late to make french fries: Jimin had spent too long in bed now. But he still had work, and just the thought of leaving the bed, leaving Jungkook, made him want to whine in frustration and bury his face in Jungkook's shoulder.

Jimin shifted, glancing over Jungkook's broad frame to the nightstand, reading the time. Sighed before kissing the top of Jungkook's bare shoulder, carefully pulling himself away and sitting up.

Sat there, just looking at Jungkook as he shifted in his sleep, lying on his back, one hand resting on his shallowly rising and falling stomach, the other elegantly curled next to his head.

Jimin leaned over, brushing back Jungkook's messy mop of hair, and planted a kiss on his forehead.

"I'll miss you today," he whispered against his brow, kissing the tip of Jungkook's nose, heart jumping into his throat as he fought the urge to peck the maknae's lips as well.

"Have a good day, Jungkookie."

And when Jimin left, dressed and ready for work, Jungkook's lips finally quirked up into a happy smile. He hadn't been awake for very long, but maybe he should pretend to be asleep more often.

"I'll miss you, too."

"Can you tell us more about Kim Minwo's relationship with Ms. Lee?"

Jungkook's brows furrowed in confusion, head spinning, stomach turning with nausea, because why did they want to know now?

"Min… Minwo-ssi?" Jungkook asked hesitantly, unsure of what trap the officials had laid out for

him this time.

“Yes. You stated in your earlier court hearings that Mr. Kim was the one to suggest you hire a new assistant. Is that correct?”

Jungkook nodded dumbly, remembering when he’d still fought for himself in court. “That’s correct. He suggested I hire a new assistant and even recommended Ms. Lee out of the applicants. I trusted his opinion, so I hired her.”

The officer nodded, thumbing through the contents of a manilla folder. “And what was the relationship between Mr. Kim and Ms. Lee like?”

Jungkook shrugged, still wondering when they’d asked him to confess for the murder he’d committed. “Normal. It was normal, sir,” he muttered softly. “Sometimes I would catch him watching her… he looked angry whenever he watched her, but I didn’t think much of it. Minwo-ssi looked angry whenever he was too deep in thought.”

“So there was nothing suspicious about the way Mr. Kim and Ms. Lee interacted? Nothing that would suggest something else was going on?”

Jungkook shook his head slowly, mind still spinning and spinning, remembering the blood coating his hands as he’d worked to stop Jisoo from bleeding out on his office floor. But for some reason, he could see it now. Could see his hands closing around her throat as she thrashed and screamed and fought. Could feel the phantom pain of her nails clawing at anything she could get her hands on. Could her her wet, raspy breaths as he struggles slowed, smashing her head back into the floor over and over again.

“Mr. Jeon?”

Jungkook blinked, eyes snapping up from where he’d been staring at his hands. Hands covered in blood, drenched in crimson, stench of iron and copper flooding his senses.

“I can’t… I can’t, I, I…” Jungkook was shaking his head, shaking and shaking. Scratched at his arms to get the blood off. “She’s dead?” He gasped, gaze whipping around the room, unable to focus on the man in front of him.

“Mr. Jeon, do you want to take a break?”

Break, breaking her neck. Snapping her skull to the side, beating her so brutally there were bruises pressed into his own hands. “Break?” Jungkook gasped out, horrified. “I didn’t, I didn’t, but I did? Did I? I wasn’t… I wasn’t even there last night.”

“What do you mean, Mr. Jeon? You weren’t *where?”*

“I wasn’t… I wasn’t even… I was with *him.* But I hurt him and now I can’t… I’m a monster. I’m a monster. All I wanted was to be free again-”

Spiralling, spiralling past fractured columns, mind weeping and thrashing in the midst of kaleidoscopes and blood.

“Who, Mr. Jeon? Who were you with? Who did you hurt?”

“I filmed it. I filmed… I filmed Minwo hurting him.”

The officer’s mouth snapped shut, suddenly alert. “Tell me about this video. You filmed it?”

Tears splashed down Jungkook's face as he nodded, pressing his palms over his eyes in shame. "I just… I just wanted to… world what… I knew Minwo… doing…"

Jungkook was shaking so hard he almost fell out of his chair, everything confusing and bright and strange to him. Because he still wasn't in jail, had to keep reminding himself that he was being interrogated, that he needed to focus or else something worse would happen.

But he couldn't, and he was spewing words that made no sense, even to himself. And the officer only sat there with the tape rolling, asking Jungkook more questions about the video and who the people were in the video and what had happened that night, and Jungkook couldn't even think straight long enough to stop himself from thinking and speaking and he just wanted to go back home, wanted to go back home to Jimin and his hyungs, didn't want to be in this room because this room lead to prison, but this is what Jungkook had wanted, wasn't it?

He deserved to go to prison for all the awful things he'd done.

And Jungkook was about to confess to killing Jisoo, about to tell the tape recorder how blood covered his hands and Jisoo was dead, when the door opened and the officer was beckoned out to talk about something urgent.

And Jungkook was confused when the officer came back inside and suddenly Jungkook's handcuffs were being taken off.

"Where are we meeting?"

"Oh, sweet Min-ah. You'll know exactly where to find me."

"I don't know, Minwo-ssi. Stop playing these games. You wanted to meet, then let's meet, and tell me where the hell you'll be."

A delighted laugh. "You never were the brightest, were you, love?"

Jimin's hand crushed around the little black flip phone, plastic creaking as he grit his teeth. "I'm hanging up in five seconds, and if you don't tell me where we're meeting I'll disappear and you'll never find me."

Minwo's laugh died off at that, and from years of this very thing Jimin could feel the oncoming rage. Because that's what Minwo wanted. Taehyung was right about that. He wanted Jimin back, one way or another, and Minwo of all people knew how well Jimin could disappear if he chose to.

"GCF. On the roof."

Jimin's heart beat in his throat, stomach dipping with dread. "When?"

"Tonight. After the sun's gone down."

And all of Jimin's rage sank low in his gut, mixing with the terror he'd lived every day for two years. Because this was it: Jimin was facing his demon at last.

survive, survive, survive

~~Not like this. You need to do it the right way. With a legal team and him standing trial. You can't do this now.~~

“Oh, and Min-ah?”

Jimin didn’t say anything, just listening.

“If you bring anyone besides yourself, there will be major consequences.”

Jimin swallowed hard, his mind immediately flashing to Jihyun, Jihyun, Jihyun.

“I love you, Min-ah. I’ll see you later tonight.”

And the line went dead.

The sun was going down.

Hayoon stumbled through the quickly darkening streets, vision doubled and swinging and lurched.

Tears rippled over her red, blotchy face and she smiled drunkenly as she made her way towards her destination.

Dragged her feet past the wailing sirens, stench of ashes and smoke choking the air. Past the apartment she knew Namjoon used to live in. And she knew, she knew Minwo was finally going through with those wicked dreams he used to tell her about every night during the four years she’d lived with him.

She remembered that black box very clearly- remembered how Minwo had dreamed and planned and talked about the bombs, and yet she’d never thought he was serious.

But she was too far gone to really care about anything else but her current goal.

Too far gone.

So she gripped the sleek black gun in one hand, bullets in the other, and continued in the direction she’d watched Minwo’s car speed off in.

And she knew it could only be one place, so she dragged her bloody feet towards GCF.

The last tendrils of daylight bled from the sky, crimson drops plastered through with navy blues.

There were so many stars out.

Pollution cleared from the sky for once, a million little splatters of glitter painted into the canvas above him, he tilted his head up to look at the very top of the massive office building in front of him. And GCF looked beautiful, the company’s logo standing out loud and proud, Jungkook’s name still up there.

Jimin shoved his hands in his pockets, heart beating low and fast in his chest as he stepped through the bloody blues of the sky towards the front doors. Jimin’s wind-swept hair brushed over his eyes, a chill biting the faded, late-summer night as his fingers gently curled over the handle of the glass doors.

The door was open, just like Minwo said it would be.

Jimin stepped inside, the darkness of the office hitting him, so different from how he'd always seen it: busy, bustling with people, bright. But it was empty now, nobody in sight.

And Jimin thought it was a little strange. A little strange since all the times Jimin had been here at this time of night, there'd always been *some* people still there, passionate and working and hurrying to get a project done. And it was almost as if Jungkook's absence had infected the entire staff with bleakness- Jimin could see it in the walls, how Jungkook's pictures had been taken down, the halls barren and white.

Jimin glanced at the tables by the windows, a deep ache blooming in his chest as he remembered the cute, dorky, nervous CEO that had sat right across from him, offering a cup of water. The day had been brighter, and Jimin's future had been brighter, lovelier.

Now it was dark, the sun bleeding out into the beyonds of the world, replaced by suffocating nightfall.

Jimin forced himself to look away. Because with those memories came all the nights Jungkook had brought him a cup of water, there to silently offer comfort and support. All the times that damn yellow blanket had been wrapped over his shoulders, bringing with it warmth and blooming love. And he remembered the man he loved who had brought him happiness and safety and confidence.

Jimin made his way to the elevators, only to find they were out of order. So he took the stairs. Made his way up flight after flight, until he reached the 22nd floor. The last floor before the roof. The place Minwo had fucked him the first time. Fucked him in that back room where Jimin had gotten lost in the massive building, not even knowing what floor he was really on.

It was easy to find the entrance to the roof. And again, it was unlocked. Jimin tugged the massive metal door closed behind him, surprised when the lock clicked after him.

He was trapped.

Jimin stole a shuddering breath, running a hand through his hair, heart boiling into overdrive, pounding in his ears. Gripped the rungs of the ladder in front of him, cold metal biting his palms.

And he climbed.

And the first thing he saw wasn't Minwo. Wasn't Minwo, no. It was a figure slumped against the short cement wall around the perimeter of the roof. Gagged and bound, blood dried down his throat and on his hands, right eye swollen with a bruise.

Taehyung.

And the person tied up next to him. He was bloody and bruised as well, but unlike Tae, he was unconscious. Head tilted back into the cement wall, gag firmly in place, eyes rolled back in his head as blood trickled from somewhere on his forehead.

Jin-hyung.

"You're late, Min-ah."

Jungkook stumbled through his broken front door, the handle completely busted off, wood splintered and littering the floor. Curtains torn down, couch cushions and pillows scattered, dishes smashed all over the floor. And there was blood everywhere.

“Hyung?” Jungkook asked, voice wavering and broken. “Hyungs?”

No answers.

“Jin-hyung?” Jungkook called out, broken glass crunching underfoot as he made his way through the torn up living room.

It was dark, and when Jungkook tried turning on the lights, nothing happened. The power had been cut- the oven and microwave lights were off, and when Jungkook tried turning on the faucet, no water came out.

“Yoong-hyung?” Jungkook called, panic beginning to beat strong and fast through his veins. “Tae-hyung?”

Nobody answered, everything silent. Jungkook squinted, trying to see through the dark, wishing he had his phone or a flashlight or something that he could use for light.

Jungkook made his way past the living room and kitchens, down the dark hall that led to the stairs. Turned, nearly tripped on something shattering against the first step. It was a picture of Jungkook and his hyungs, including Hoseok and Namjoon. Taken before the assault, all of them happy, faces beaming with blinding smiles, Jungkook himself caught mid-laugh.

Jungkook picked up the picture, noticing the blood staining the corners. He tucked it in his pocket before continuing up the stairs.

“Hyung?” Jungkook called out again. “Is anyone home?”

And maybe part of Jungkook was too far gone to truly panic. Still dazed from everything happening. From the fact that the police had just let him go without an explanation, letting him stumble out the front doors of the police station to find his way back home.

Static burned through his mind, on the cusp of panic, but nothing really quite able to push him over. Not the blood, or the darkness, or the shattered picture frames as he got to the top of the stairs.

Maybe he had killed them all, too. Killed his hyungs before he’d left and the police just hadn’t noticed. And the guilt started setting in before Jungkook could stop it. Guilt, so much fucking guilt as he remembered all the things his hyungs had done for him.

He’d killed them.

Jungkook looked down at his hands as he stumbled his way to Yoongi’s bedroom, the first room to his left. Saw blood speckled over his hands and nearly started sobbing. “No, no,” Jungkook whispered in horror. “I’m sorry… I’m sorry.”

Jungkook pushed on Yoongi’s cracked open door, surprised to find nothing much out of place. Room was dark, but still neatly organized. Missing Yoongi, though.

killed them, killed them

Jungkook had killed them all

and his hands were made of obsidian and onyx

Jungkook's shoulder slammed into the wall as he reeled back into the hallway. Couldn't, couldn't stop staring at his hands as he stumbled to Jin's door. Fumbled with the doorknob, getting blood all over the handle.

Unlike Yoongi's room, Jin's was a mess. Covered in blood, things knocked over, picture frames smashed.

No Jin.

"Hyung?" Jungkook wailed pitifully.

Killed him, killed him, you killed him.

Monster.

"Jin-hyung? Yoongi-hyung?" Jungkook finally stumbled his way over to his own bedroom, seeing the door slightly cracked open. **"Tae-hyung?"**

He slapped a bloody hand against the door, hinges squealing as it crookedly swung open. And his room was dark, just like the rest of the house, except the windows were open. Cool breeze billowing out the short curtains, starry night sky outside gleaming and glittering above the haunting light the streetlamp cast into the room.

And there were two figures on his bed.

Jungkook dragged his feet into the room, mind empty as the sharp corners of the bedframe pinched against his shins, thighs touching the mattress.

Blood, blood, blood.

Looked black against the sheets, soaking the yellow blanket the two people laid on top of.

Yoongi and Hoseok, lying back to back, arms somehow pressed precisely together.

Jungkook leaned forward, bracing a hand against the mattress as he gingerly touched Yoongi's thin shoulder. "Hyung?" He almost whimpered. "Hyung?"

Jungkook could see the faint fluttering of his hyung's lashes, and the shallow rise and fall of his chest. And Jungkook hadn't killed Yoongi. He hadn't killed his Yoongi-hyung.

But then he looked closer, Hoseok faced away, back pressed flush against Yoongi's back. And Jungkook looked closed at the odness of their arms so perfectly held together.

And he realized there was some sort of metal bar stabbed through their forearms, bolting them together. Even the arms they were laying on were bolted together, so much blood bubbling from around the furious wounds.

And then Jungkook saw the note. Saw that a note had been nailed into Hoseok's shoulder, soaked in blood but mostly intact.

Jungkook reached over their bolted arms, tremors running through his hands, up his arms as he pried the nail from the flesh of Hoseok's shoulder. Unfolded the note, too numb to even properly react to what laid under him.

Minwo,

I need to leave.

Please don't be too angry with me.

I won't tell you where I'm going, so don't try to look for me.

I need to be on my own, and I need to figure some stuff out.

I'm sorry.

-Jimin

~~He left a fucking note saying he was leaving and I want to know where the fuck he is and what you fucking told him.~~

Jungkook flipped the note over, seeing the faint dots of permanent marker that'd bled through the paper.

GCF

And then Jungkook noticed the bomb attached to the bars bolted through his hyung's arms.

Jimin legs were shot with adrenaline as that voice wrapped through his ears. He shuddered, stomach twisting violently as he felt phantom fingers stuck down his throat, controlling his weight.

"It's been twenty minutes since the sun set. I was almost worried you weren't coming."

Jimin took too long to realize he needed to respond. That this man in front of him wasn't a nightmare, wasn't a day terror, wasn't just the voice that constantly haunted his mind.

This Minwo was real.

His pupils were blown so wide his eyes were as black as obsidian. The city lights cast a shadow over the sharp cut of his jaw, illuminating the scratches dashed over his skin, the blood drenching his hands and clothes. And he was just as tall, just as terrifying, and just as insane as Jimin had always known him to be.

But this time there was something different.

Something… off.

And then Minwo was stepping closer to him, and Jimin's heart beat like a frightened bird's. Fast, fast, fast, thrumming against his ribcage. But beyond the initial terror, beyond the lurking memories prodding at the back of his head, was something new he hadn't expected.

Defiance.

Jimin's features sharpened into something made of steel, eyes shifting away from Minwo to his family, Tae staring up at him with one eye bruised shut.

"Why are *they* here?" Jimin asked, voice low, brimming with cold rage.

Minwo stopped in his tracks, almost surprised by Jimin's response. Because Jimin wasn't cowering, wasn't on his knees begging for forgiveness, asking to be taken back. That's probably what Minwo had expected, after all. But that Jimin was gone.

"Min-ah, you sound so grown up now."

Jimin swallowed a snarl, refusing to let Minwo see anything past the blank mask he'd plastered over his expressions. "Why have you brought them here? You won't be able to blame that on Jungkook anymore."

"Jungkook deserves what he got."

"For what *you* did."

"Oh, Min-ah. I can't believe you think so lowly of me."

"You framed him. You beat the assistant that night."

Minwo rolled his eyes, irritation taking over the amusement that'd been on his face. "In case you forgot, I was in your bed fucking you that night. In a different city. There's no way I could've been there."

Jimin's hands were clenched so tightly into fists he thought his skin might tear at the knuckles. "You drugged me. I was unconscious for 4 hours, and when I woke up you had scratches on your hands and neck."

"Those were from you."

"You fucked me from behind. You always fucked me from behind. There's no way."

Minwo was silent, those blacks eyes steeled and blunted and matte. Obsidian and onyx, obsidian and onyx, that's all Jimin could see in his eyes. Darkness, something sinister rolling off Minwo's shoulders,

"I'm not stupid enough to believe you anymore, Minwo-ssi. I know you did it. Lying won't change anything for me at this point."

Minwo's eyes raked up and down Jimin's body, taking him in, and it took everything in Jimin's soul not to throw up right then and there.

"You're still mine," was all Minwo said, taking another step towards Jimin.

"I'm not yours. I'll never be yours again. You had me and you *ruined me."*

Minwo shook his head, a chilled laugh tumbling past his lips, eyes still unflinchingly trained on Jimin. “I *perfected* you.”

Jimin bit the inside of his cheek so hard he tasted blood, gritting his teeth down, unable to help it. “Just like you *perfected* the assistant? Or Jungkook? Or Namjoon? Or Hayoon?”

At Hayoon’s name, Minwo’s nostrils flared, eyes widening in shock. “How do you…”

“I know everything,” Jimin whispered. “I know what you did to her. I know how you drove her to attempt suicide. How you tried to stitch her wrists up yourself and when she was pretty much dead you dumped her in a hospital parking lot.”

Minwo was shaking his head, something off balance in the air. Something wrong, wrong, wrong. “You don’t know anything.”

“I know Hayoon,” Jimin continued as calmly as he could, swallowing mouthfulls of bloody saliva. “I’ve talked to her. She told me what you did to her. How you beat her just like you beat me. Raped her every night. Wouldn’t let her eat. Wouldn’t let her leave your house.”

Minwo was getting closer and closer, and Jimin thought he heard Tae whimpering pitifully somewhere to his left. But all Jimin could see was *him.* “I know what you did to Namjoon. I know how he found out what you were planning to do to Jungkook. That you were originally going to kill the both of them- Jungkook and the assistant. But you didn’t because Namjoon made a deal to keep them alive, to give them a chance.”

Minwo backhanded Jimin so hard he flew back, shoulders slamming into cement, head and hips cracking against the cold surface. Jimin scrambled to scoot back, away from the kick Minwo had aimed to send into his ribs. Rolled to the side, pushing himself up as fast as he could.

Minwo’s aura was tinged with red. Red rage, red fury. Jimin had infuriated him. And that was just what he wanted.

“You wired him so you would always know what he was saying. You even cut open his arm and shoved a GPS tracker in there to make sure you would always know where he was. He couldn’t do anything to alert the police, couldn’t tell anybody. He was too afraid of you killing Jungkook or the assistant.”

Minwo rushed forward once more and slammed his fist into Jimin’s jaw so hard all he could see were stars. Stars bursting to life inside his school, rattling his mind, making him stumble back.

“Little *bitch,”* Minwo spat.

“And once Jungkook had been arrested, safe in police custody, after you’d killed Jisoo off, he decided he had nothing left to lose. So he came to me. He told me everything.”

Jimin dodged another hit through the spots in his eyes, only to grunt in pain as a brutal kick was smashed into his stomach. Jimin fell to the ground with a groan, head lolling to the side as Minwo delivered kick after kick to Jimin’s back. And Jimin was facing Tae and Jin, bound and gagged and bloody.

And Jin was awake. He was awake, and tears were streaming down his face. And yes, Jimin remembered the letter Namjoon had left for Jimin to give to Jin. Hadn’t taken Jimin but a split second to put two and two together. And seeing the devastation, the choked sobs Jin screamed out through the gag, Jimin found his strength again.

Minwo grabbed the back of Jimin's jacket, hauling him to stand up before dragging Jimin over to where Jin and Tae were. Flinched as he was thrown in front of them, Jimin unable to see with blood now dripping into his eyes from a cut somewhere on his head.

"You… you had Namjoon text Jungkook that night… had him text and make sure Jungkook would leave the office at just the right moment."

Minwo pulled something from behind his back, hidden by his suit coat. Something black and sleek and dangerous. And Jimin's heart dropped at the sight of the gun, staring straight down its barrel as Minwo stepped forward, pressing it against Jimin's forehead.

And then Minwo knelt in front of him, pressing the barrel to his brow until Jimin's head was pushed back. Felt Minwo trail the tip of the gun down his face, his cheek, his chin. The cool tip touched his throat, going all the way to his chest, resting right above his heart.

"You have gotten smarter, haven't you? You missed a few things, though." Jimin met Minwo's gaze head on. "Did Hayoon ever tell you about how she came back to me? How she went on those trips to Japan with me?" Jimin's mouth dropped open the tiniest bit, Minwo digging the tip of the gun harder into his collarbone. "That hickey you asked about when I got back from that last trip? It was from her. Little bitch never could stay away, even after I put her sister in a coma."

Jimin couldn't speak, couldn't do anything but stare into Minwo's dark eyes.

"She knew about Namjoon. I even had Namjoon fuck her once or twice. Played and played with my little toys. Loved hearing Jungkook fuck her, too. Made her keep her phone on so I could hear."

Jimin shook his head, remembering how he'd held her hand so hard just the previous night. Had walked into the police station with her. Confessed with her. Wondered why she'd never bothered to tell him that.

"You look surprised, Min-ah. You want to hear what I had your precious Hoseok doing for me?" Jimin's heart stopped and stuttered, mind crushed with kaleidoscopic dread as Minwo leaned forward, lips brushing against the shell of Jimin's ear.

"I fucked him, too. He came to me after he found out you were still alive. Tried to make a deal with me, make me let you go because you were too stupid to leave. And I fucked him. And when he left he went back to his cute little dance studio and broke like a fucking marionette."

Jimin's stomach lurched, thinking about how Hoseok had pleaded with him that night, asked him to leave. But… but Hoseok had never said anything, never even hinted to the fact he'd done something like that. But Jimin also knew his hyung had always been so much better at hiding things like that.

"You should've heard him scream," Minwo whispered, lips brushing the shell of Jimin's ear, hot breath sending shivers down Jimin's spine. "How he cried for you, begging me to let you go. Sucked my dick like a fucking pig, crying the whole time."

Tears finally welled up in Jimin's eyes, bile surging up his throat, hot and rancid. Jerked to the side, spitting and coughing the bile out on the cement, gagging as Minwo traced the gun down Jimin's spine.

Jimin looked up, tears dripping from his chin, falling into the weak puddle of bile beneath him. And Jin was just watching him with a sad look in his eyes, then looking away.

Minwo wasn't lying.

The gun was gone from Jimin's spine, then, and Jimin looked up at Minwo, shivering violently as he saw Minwo's soft smile. "And guess what? Namjoon's dead. I killed him not hours ago. Ask your friend there," Minwo chuckled, nodding to Taehyung.

Jimin saw the truth in Tae's terrified eyes.

"Your heart was always so soft, Min-ah," Minwo murmured, reaching forward, brushing strands of hair from Jimin's eyes. "Always so pretty, so naive." Jimin gagged again, tears blurring his vision as Minwo leaned forward, planting a kiss on the top of his head.

"I framed Jungkook to keep him away from you. Of course Namjoon had leverage at first, but after I wired him, there was no way he could've done anything without me knowing. I could've killed Jungkook a long time ago if I wanted to. But by then, I realized I would lose you if he died. Especially when Namjoon told me he saw Jungkook give you a piece of paper. That you had been talking more."

"Looked it up on the security tapes," Minwo said while nodding to himself, as if thinking back to that very moment. "Was so mad." Minwo kissed the top of Jimin's head again. "Had Namjoon follow you after I kicked you out that night, knew you went to his house. Of course I knew."

Jimin shook his head, world crumbling around him.

"I had him follow you every time. But for some reason Namjoon was convinced you would die in the snow. So I let him take you to where you were trying to go. Wanted to teach you a lesson, show you how much you need me. But Jungkook is more manipulative than I thought. Lured you in and stole you right from under me."

"But now you're here with me. You're here, Min-ah. You came back to me. We're going to run away together. Run far away where you'll be safe, be mine. All you have to do is come with me."

Jimin tilted his head up, taking in Minwo's gentle smile, his black eyes turned kind and loving.

And Jimin spat in Minwo's face.

The glob of spit splattered across Minwo's cheek, right over his brow. But he didn't even flinch. Brought his hand up, swiping at the spit, looking at it curiously.

And then Minwo raised his other arm, gun in hand, and fired.

Jungkook was running.

Heart bursting and breaking in his chest, sharp pangs of pain shooting through his lungs as he pushed and pushed and pushed himself to run faster, faster, faster.

Had to get to GCF.

He'd run miles, but he knew the route by heart.

And when bolted past the security gates, no guard there, he tripped, stumbling to the side as he vomited up bile, body rebelling from being pushed too hard. But he didn't have time. So he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, swallowing the rancid taste and pushing forward.

But then he heard the gunshot.

Jungkook’s head whipped up towards the roof.

He was only frozen for a second, dread setting in as he bounded over to the glass door, fumbling to pull his set of keys from his pocket. But the door was already unlocked. And Jungkook was sprinting towards the elevator, pushing the buttons in a panic. Nearly screamed in frustration when he realized it wasn’t working.

So the stairs it would be.

And it took him too long. Too long to run up 22 flights of stairs. Puked another two or three times, collapsing on the 19th floor, exhaustion eating away at his body, about to pass out.

And then he heard another gunshot.

Chapter End Notes

how is everyone doing after this chapter?
let me know what you think! i tried to be quick with this update!
there's not very many chapters left now, so buckle in ;)

wings

Chapter Notes

> as a WARNING, there's a lot of blood and violence in this chapter, and a scene at the end that could be triggering. please READ ALL TAGS before starting this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jin buckled forward with an agonizing scream, Jimin watching as blood bloomed through his dirty white shirt. And Jimin was frozen, too frozen to even react, brain still trying to process that Minwo had just shot his Jin-hyung in the shoulder.

Jin, who'd held him when he'd first turned up at their doorstep all those months ago, half frozen and fever-blazed. Jin, who had cooked meals and offered blankets and stayed with Jimin after he'd left Minwo. Jin, who had listened. Listened without judgement, believed in him, loved him.

Blooming crimson and choked breaths, Jin was slumping back against the cement wall, head tilting back.

and it was

it was too, too much

death, this was not

this would not be Jin's end

Jimin lunged, a fury without wings as Minwo went to raise the gun again. Because this, this was not how things ended. Not after all the shit Minwo had put Jungkook through. Hayoon, Jisoo, Namjoon. So many fucking people. This was not how the story ended for any of them, and it certainly wasn't how it would end for Jin.

Jimin slammed his body into Minwo's, clawing for the gun, crazed and desperate to get it away.

Couldn't, couldn't, couldn't let Minwo kill his family.

Minwo had taken everything from Jimin, after all. His dignity, his freedom, his trust and love and courage.

But not his family.

No, not this new family Jimin had found. Jungkook's family.

Jimin wouldn't let that happen.

The gun clacked to the ground, skittering across the cement, Minwo having not expected the interference. A split second, Jimin leaping after the gun before Minwo could get to it. Minwo didn't hesitate in jumping after him, slamming on top of Jimin's body, cement burning and scraping up his skin, bones creaking with the force of everything.

Jimin took hit after hit, holding onto the gun for dear life. Tried to turn it back on the monster, tried to freeze Minwo in his tracks. But Minwo's large hands wrapped over Jimin's, trying to wrestle the gun from his grasp and Jimin did the only thing he could think of, smashing his lip against the gun as he sunk his teeth as hard as he could into Minwo's hand.

Minwo wailed in pain, letting go of the gun as Jimin spat a chunk of flesh out of his mouth, blood spurting everywhere.

"YOU BITCH!"

Jimin was smashed back into the concrete flooring of the roof, Minwo pinning his smaller body down easily. Jimin didn't even have time to think as the gun was wrenched from his grasp so hard something in his own hands snapped, pain screaming through his arms.

And then the tip of the gun was being pressed into his forehead so hard Jimin bit back a pathetic cry. There was something crazed, something so dark in Minwo's eyes, something tipped off a scale completely. And then Minwo lifted the gun and pulled the trigger once more, not even breaking eye contact with Jimin.

Tae screamed through his gag, and Jimin froze, terror stabbing through him. Realized he was only making things worse- there was no winning. Minwo was bigger and stronger and faster than him. Realized if he continued to fight, his friends would die if they weren't dying already. Minwo smiled when he saw this realization in Jimin's eyes.

"Stop struggling, Min-ah. There's consequences for everything in life."

Jimin couldn't breathe, couldn't breathe as he heard Jin's wet, rasping breaths mere feet away. And he couldn't live knowing they had been killed because of him, couldn't live without them at all. So Jimin remained quiet, pinned beneath Minwo's heavy body, staring up into the face of the man that'd destroyed him.

"If you come with me I'll let them live. Hoseok and Yoongi, too."

Jimin's eyes snapped open wider, bile burning his throat, the roof of his mouth tacky with the need to puke.

"You want to know about them, don't you?" Minwo didn't wait for Jimin to even try to ask, pressing the gun to Jimin's neck once more with a sweet smile. "Let's just say they're in a bit of a sticky situation. And I wouldn't make me mad if I were you."

Minwo pulled out a little black box, flipping the lid open after unlocking it. And it was a button, a button that could do anything. And Minwo must've seen Jimin's horrified curiosity because he was already standing from where he had Jimin pinned down, grabbing his collar and pulling Jimin to stand up with him.

Tae started thrashing against his restraints, screaming just enough that Jimin risked a glance at his injured friend. Eyes were so, so wide, shaking his head, tears soaking the gag in his mouth.

"I've planted bombs at GCF staff members' houses. I press this button and half the city is covered in smoke. Your friend saw it first hand."

Jimin didn't want to believe him. Didn't want to believe that he was insane enough to do something like this, but the crazed look in his eyes… it was more than an empty threat. Didn't want to treat it like an empty threat in case he wasn't bluffing- Minwo wouldn't hesitate to blow up half the city if he could, and Jimin saw that.

“Namjoon helped me set them up over the past year. Helped me set up all of them. It helps having a little handy man to do things for you. Too bad it killed him in the end. And poor Yoongi and Hoseok… holding a bomb is terrifying, you know?”

“What do you want from me?” Jimin whispered, hating how pathetic and weak and resigned he sounded. That alone made a smile tug at Minwo’s lips, the fact that Jimin was finally giving up.

“I want you, Min-ah. You’re mine.” Minwo stooped down, pressing a little kiss to Jimin’s lips before he had time to push back. Felt Minwo’s meaty fingers grip his chin too tightly, forcing Jimin to look at him. “If you come with me, I’ll call the ambulance, let them know your little friends need help.”

Jimin couldn’t help the tears that brimmed in his eyes. Couldn’t help as they splashed down his face. “Why?” Jimin gasped out. “Why are you doing this?”

Minwo sighed, rolling his eyes before pulling back. “Are you coming with me or not?” Minwo aimed the gun in Jin and Tae’s direction for emphasis. “I never was a patient man, Min-ah, and I’ve waited long enough for you to get over this little phase.”

And the little hope inside Jimin’s heart guttered out, stone cold, dark. Because there was no way out of this. No way to win, to save everyone. Only one way, and Jimin didn’t even know if Minwo would keep his word. “How do I know you won’t push that button anyways?”

Minwo beamed, grinning almost childishly. “Look at you asking important questions. Good job, Min-ah.” Minwo tapped the gun against Jimin’s tender head, chuckling softly. “Using your tiny little brain.”

Jimin knew it was stupid, feeling a flash of hurt at those demeaning words. Gut coiled hotly with embarrassment, because he really did feel stupid. So fucking stupid. If he hadn’t gone to Jungkook’s house that snowy winter night so many months ago, none of this would’ve happened. Jin and Tae wouldn’t be bleeding out from gunshot wounds, Namjoon wouldn’t be dead, and Jungkook wouldn’t have turned himself in.

All of this, despite circumstances or reasonings, was Jimin’s fault. All of it. He shouldn’t have been so selfish, shouldn’t have gotten so attached to so many people. He’d thought about only himself, and now people had died.

“How do I know,” Jimin swallowed the devastation bleeding through his lungs. “How do I know you’ll keep your word?”

Minwo’s eyes softened a bit, and Jimin held his gaze, the last embers of his defiance refusing to let him bow his head. “I just want you, Min-ah. All I’ve wanted was you. That’s why Jungkook had to go. Why Jisoo had to go. Yes, I loved Hayoon, but my heart is yours. It has been since the moment I laid eyes on you. You may not understand what I’ve had to do now, but you will once we get you thinking straight again.”

Numbness was a strange feeling, because technically you shouldn’t be able to feel it at all. But perhaps it was a lack, that lack of something that you really felt. Because he only felt that bleak, wintry numbness as Minwo leaned forward, planting a kiss on the top of his head, the gun still pressed to Jimin’s throat with a thumb laying over the button in his other hand.

“Do they really mean that much to you?” Minwo asked softly.

And maybe Jimin had been naive enough to have seen past such a question before, but he wasn’t

now. “No. Not as much as you. I haven’t… I haven’t even known them that long. They really don’t mean anything to me.”

Minwo pulled back, looking into Jimin’s eyes long and hard. And Jimin let that numbness consume him, refusing the tears stinging at his eyes, refusing to let Minwo believe anything but the words he’d just uttered. Because he knew if Minwo believed anything else, if he believed that Jimin really did love his newfound family, they’d be dead in a matter of seconds.

Jimin’s heart was beating so hard, willing his everything into Minwo believing his lies.

“Oh, Min-ah,” Minwo whispered tenderly. “You were always a terrible liar.”

Jimin’s body was coated in cold sweat, legs trembling from beneath him, boneless and coated in numbed nerves. Heart beating beating beating, thumping hot through his head as he looked up into those black eyes, waiting for the press of a button, another gunshot.

And a gunshot came.

Split right past Jimin’s cheek and sliced right into Minwo’s shoulder, the black gun from Minwo’s bloody, bitten hand clattering to the ground as Minwo screamed bloody murder.

Jimin’s head whipped to the side, scrambling from where he’d fallen to the ground, eyes focusing on the woman holding a smoking gun.

Jungkook tugged at the metal door that lead to the roof, the last gunshot ringing through his head as he scrambled towards the metal rungs of the ladder. Realized as the door shut, hearing the click, that Minwo had somehow set the door up to lock after being opened from the inside. Trapped on the roof. No going back now.

He tugged himself up each rung as fast as he could, slowing near the top, peeking up at the scene playing out on the roof. He struggled to stifle his wheezing breaths, lungs burning as embers of ebony poked spots in his vision.

He swallowed the urge to vomit, focusing on the splatters of blood, the gun on the ground, Hayoon’s back. Jimin on the ground, bleeding and bruised. Tae and Jin tied up and gagged, blood drenching Jin’s shirt.

Minwo, clutching a black box to his chest, staring at Hayoon as if he couldn’t believe she was there.

“Put the gun down, Yoonie,” Minwo murmured, holding up hand glistening black and crimson. “Don’t be a fool. Put it down.”

Hayoon dragged her foot a step forward, hunched a little, both hands gripping the gun she’d just fired. “You killed her.”

Those words punctured through the air, right into Jungkook’s head. Flashes of Jisoo that terrible night everything had started. Shook his head, thumping his forehead against the cement edge in front of him, willing himself not to slip further into his memories.

“Hayoonie, you know I had to. She took you away from me,” Minwo was saying, still clutching that odd black box.

“You took my sun,” Hayoon whispered.

Jungkook shivered, something in Hayoon’s voice unrecognizable from anything he’d ever heard from her. Something gone, something severed from the woman who’d lost her sister.

“She took you away from me,” Minwo explained carefully. Perhaps he could see in her eyes that she didn’t particularly care for anyone’s lives at the moment, because she was raising the gun. From where Jungkook was positioned on the ladder, he watched Hayoon shift, just enough so that he could see her side profile.

A trembling smile tugged her lips upwards, her delicate brown eyes glazed with blood-lust, small fingers itching at the trigger.

“You took my world from me, so I’ll take yours from you.”

And then Hayoon pointed the gun at Jimin.

Jimin blanched, staring down the barrel of yet another gun.

“No, no! Hayoonie, stop and think about this.” Jimin had never heard Minwo sound so unnerved, so panicked, so unprepared.

“He’s the only thing you care about right now,” Hayoon whispered, voice monotone, flat. Eyes were empty, empty, empty. “Just like Jisoo was the only thing I cared about. I take him away from you, and you’ll lose everything just like I did.”

Jimin couldn’t find any words to say, anything to defend himself, to try and begin to convince her not to shoot him.

“Hayoonie, don’t you care about this,” Minwo asked, holding up the black button. “You know what it does, don’t you? I used to tell you about my plans, how it would free us. How we would be able to live so happily. You wouldn’t want people to die, would you?”

Hayoon pulled the trigger, the gunshot rippling through the air.

Pain exploded through Jimin’s leg. Numbed out anything else going on around him. Collapsed back against the cement beneath him, skull smacking against rough, gritted rock. Ripples and splashes of agony pulsed in a flash of heat through his leg. Mouth open in a silent wail of hurt, eyes shut so hard, too hard.

A cackling laugh, a witch’s laugh. “You can’t play your own game, can you? You don’t think there’s anyone else out there that doesn’t care as much as you do. You think,” Hayoon was drowning in laughter. “You think I have anything left to lose. That you have anything else you haven’t already taken away from me.”

For once, Minwo was quiet.

“Don’t you dare move. I’ll kill him. I’ll shoot him as many times as you’ve beaten me up.”

The pain began to even in his mind, his thoughts still sluggish with agony, but finally able to open his teary eyes. Couldn’t keep back the groan of pain, the bullet lodged deep in his thigh spraying hot blood over the ground beneath him, soaking through his pants.

Jimin lifted his head, trying to see Hayoon.

But deep down he knew the Hayoon he'd gone to the police with just the day before was no longer there. The woman that'd clung to him and cried for forgiveness had finally withered beneath the trauma, and what was left was the shell in front of him. And yet, he still understood her. He still understood what was going through her head. The dark self she'd finally let take over, the shadow that'd engulfed the moon once the sun had guttered out.

Jimin understood.

What he didn't understand, through the haze of spasming pain, was why there was a real shadow slowly creeping up behind Hayoon. Blinked and blinked, mind fuzzing as his head thunked back against the blood soaked cement beneath him, no energy left.

Eyes cracked open, straining to see what was going on through his peripherals.

Everything happened in a split second.

The shadow wrapped around Hayoon, taking her by surprise as she snarled and screamed and raged at the grip around her, the gun wrenched away and then whipped at her temple.

She crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

Minwo had jumped for the gun that'd fallen to the ground behind him as soon as Hayoon had been apprehended.

Jimin finally found the strength to sit up, biting back the spasms of pain rippling through his body at the movement, gaze fixing on the shadow holding the gun. Watched as the figure stepped into the light from the city below.

Jimin shook his head, vision blurring and focusing and blurring again, refusing to believe it was Jungkook.

Jungkook had turned himself in.

Jungkook had been arrested.

Jungkook wasn't supposed to be here.

Jimin had thought he would never see Jungkook again. To see him standing just feet away, holding a gun, eyes wide and terrified…

"Jungkook," Jimin gasped, the maknae's beautiful doe eyes snapping to Jimin.

"I was wondering if you'd show up," Minwo said from behind Jimin.

Jimin didn't have enough energy to turn his head, gaze remaining focused on the man he loved, the person he thought he'd never see again. Their eyes were locked, and Jimin finally let tears fall down his face, seeing the brokenness in his Jungkookie's gaze.

Jungkook was pale, face gaunt, the dark circles under his eyes like smudges of black paint. He was covered in blood, hands and shirt and shoes smeared with drying crimson. Forehead soaked in sweat, as if he'd run a marathon through a desert.

"I should've just had those damn cops take you here. It wasn't as fun to do it that way, though. I knew you'd come running once you saw the note."

Minwo seemed to have regained his confidence with Hayoon unconscious, and Jimin almost wondered if it would've been better if Hayoon had just killed him. She didn't have a vendetta against Tae or Jin or Jungkook, and she most definitely would've killed Minwo as well. That way there would've only been two deaths, and Jimin couldn't help but feel his heart sink as Jin started coughing out wet, raspy, faint coughs.

Jungkook's eyes finally drifted from Jimin's, flickering over to Tae and Jin bleeding out on the pavement to Jimin's left.

"You paid off the police?" Jimin asked weakly, remembering his whole reason for coming to this damn roof top in the first place.

"Only enough to have Jungkook released tonight. This little meeting wouldn't have been complete without him. We need to tie up all our loose ends before we leave, Min-ah."

Jungkook's eyes widened, and Jimin wished Jungkook hadn't come more than anything.

"Love, why don't you tell little Jungkookie why he should put his gun down?"

Jimin finally looked to Minwo, looked up into those black eyes, the thumb once again hovering over the button. Shook his head, looking into Minwo's eyes. Trying, for some reason, to reason with Minwo.

"I'll go with you. I won't ask any questions. I won't… I'll live with you happily. I'll never complain and I'll never leave you. Please, please let them go. Please. Take me and leave Jungkook with *them."*

Minwo quirked a brow, almost curious. "You will, huh?"

Jimin nodded quickly, more tears streaking hotly from his eyes, dripping cold from his chin to the puddle of blood below. "Please, Minwo-ssi. Please. We can go anywhere else in the world. I love you, only you. Please."

Minwo's gaze sharpened as Jungkook took a step forward, grip on the button tightening, his other hand still aiming the gun at Jungkook. "You've always been so good at begging, Min-ah. You're so good at that, baby. But I want Jungkook to beg. Want to see him grovel at my feet like he should've done years ago."

Jimin was whispering *no, no, no,* pleading with Minwo not to do this. Even pushed himself to stand up finally, all his weight on his good leg, clutching onto Minwo's blood-soaked shirt. "You don't have to do all this. You didn't have to do any of this to get me back. I love you. I was just confused. You were right."

But Minwo wasn't budging, gaze fixed on the broken young man pointing a gun at him. "I'll accept your offer if Jungkook begs."

Jimin didn't have time to say another word before he heard Jungkook set the gun on the ground, next to Hayoon's unconscious body. Didn't have time to protest, to try and get around this, to try and find a way to trick Minwo into anything else.

Jungkook slowly approached, and Jimin sank to his knees, clutching the ends of Minwo's wet shirt. Leg screaming in agony, pushing white hot pain all the way up to Jimin's eyes, a wave of dizziness suddenly causing the world to sway. Was losing blood, wound still gushing as he pushed himself to remain upright.

And then Jungkook was on his knees, too. On his knees, head bowed, hands slowly planting on the ground in front of him as he lowered his forehead to the ground.

“Please,” came the weak, near-silent plea from Jungkook’s lips.

“Speak up,” Minwo barked, shoving Jimin to the side and taking a step towards Jungkook.

Jungkook coughed, torso wracking with the effort of keeping his head in such a position when he was so weak. “Please,” Jungkook rasped. “Please spare them.”

Minwo crouched in front of Jungkook, pressing the gun to the back of Jungkook’s head, tracing a pattern through sweaty hair. “I didn’t expect you to turn yourself in like that. Made my plans for tonight a lot more complicated. You should apologize.”

Jimin watched Jungkook shiver as the gun slipped down the back of his head to beneath his jaw, urging Jungkook to look up at him. And then Minwo just looked into Jungkook’s eyes. Didn’t smile, didn’t laugh. Just looked into the pair of shattered eyes that were staring unblinkingly back at him.

“Are you prepared to die for Jimin?”

Jimin was already shaking his head, started dragging his shot leg, crawling towards them. “Please-”

Minwo shushed Jimin without looking at him, the gun digging into Jungkook’s throat a little harder. “You always said you’d rather die than live without passion. So will you die to save them all?”

Jimin didn’t wait another second, thinking back to what Hayoon had done earlier. How she had aimed the gun at Jimin, how Minwo had gone silent, frozen, unwilling to lose him. So Jimin pressed his thumb to the bullet wound in his thigh, digging into his wound, flesh squishing at the intrusion, a new bout of blood spurting out.

And Jimin howled.

The pain was overwhelming, screams tearing out of his throat of their own accord, pressing his thumb harder and harder. Screeched and wailed, thrashing on the ground as the white hot pain took over his entire body, kaleidoscopes crashing through his head.

There was a hand around his wrist in mere seconds, yanking Jimin’s thumb out of the bullet wound, cursing at him, trying to contain the blood that was spraying everywhere.

Minwo had dropped the button in order to pull at Jimin’s hand. Was kneeling next to Jimin, gun still clutched tightly in the other, his back to Jungkook. A deranged man, who was worried about losing the object of his obsession.

And while Jimin saw Jungkook go for the button, Jimin did the only thing he could think of to do next. He grabbed at the hand holding the gun, head still fuzzing with torture.

Maybe that’s why it happened.

Because Minwo really hadn’t been expecting it.

Two booming pops, the recoiling of the gun, Minwo’s eyes widening in complete shock and horror as he realized what he’d just done.

Jimin didn't register the sizzling feeling blooming in his chest. Only managed to see Jungkook charging towards them, everything funny feeling as Minwo threw the gun away from him as if it'd burnt him.

And then the last gunshot of the night sounded, and Jimin's face was sprayed with blood as the side of Minwo's head exploded.

Minwo's body fell limp, like a broken marionette, collapsing sideways.

Hayoon's arm thumped back to the concrete, her head thumping down, body going still once more.

Mood: when the party's over (slowed down edit) by Billie Eilish

Jungkook fell to his knees, skin breaking at the contact, red lotus blooming through his stomach.

The bullet that had hit Minwo had gone through Jungkook to get there.

Couldn't focus on anything but Jimin. Pool of blood slowly creeping in an expanding circle around him. And Jungkook crawled the rest of the way to get to him, finally collapsing next to his beautiful hyung, his Jimin. Used the rest of his strength to push his arm beneath Jimin's neck, propping Jimin's head up.

"Hyung?" Jungkook whispered, mind fogging slowly with lowlights, a curtain inching shut. "Jiminie?"

Jimin's eyes blinked open, hazel and moonlit. Looked up into Jungkook's eyes. Gentle smile lifted the corner of his mouth. "Jungkookie."

Jungkook shuffled his body until he was flush against Jimin, not caring about the shocks of pain burning up his entire torso. "You're going to be okay, Jiminie. You're going to be okay."

Jimin's smile tugged his eyes into beautiful crescents, a glistening tear streaking down Jimin's bloodied face. "He can't…" Jimin coughed weakly. "He's gone."

Jungkook nodded, tears flowing freely from his own eyes, dripping down onto Jimin's cheek. One of Jimin's arms slowly lifted from where it laid wrapped over his stomach, weakly flopping up, lifting the few inches Jimin could manage. Jungkook met him halfway, lowering his cheek to Jimin's wet palm.

"Don't cry, Jungkookie," Jimin's gaze was becoming lethargic, Jungkook gripping onto him tighter. "It's okay."

Jungkook shook his head, more hot tears splashing down his face. "You're going to be just fine. You're going to… you're going to live, hyung."

Jimin's thumb weakly swiped over Jungkook's cheek, wiping away his tears. "It's okay."

Jungkook shook his head, going to sit up. Needed to find a way to stop Jimin from bleeding out, stop him from- needed to stop the blood. But a shuddering, breathless whimper froze Jungkook in place, seeing the distress in Jimin's eyes.

“Don’t leave me,” Jimin gasped out wetly. “Please-”

“I need to stop you from bleeding- I need to, I need to-”

Jimin was shaking his head, another dazed, distressed whine falling from bloody lips. Coughed, started coughing and coughing, blood dribbling from the corner of his mouth, gurgling from deep in his throat. Jungkook curled back against Jimin immediately, holding him, trying to calm Jimin back down.

“You’re going to be,” Jungkook’s throat was full of sand and tears, and ocean swallowing him up, tears escaping one after the other. “You’re going to be okay, Jiminie-hyung.” Jungkook ran a hand through Jimin’s sticky hair, nodding to himself. “We’re going to- we’re going to go home tonight. We’ll watch *Titanic* with Jin-hyung like we always do.”

Jimin coughed wetly, wheezing the blood from his throat as more dripped from his nose, eyes closed tightly in pain.

“Yoongi-hyung has been working on a song to show you. Him and,” Jungkook swallowed a sob, pressing a kiss to Jimin’s bruised forehead as sirens screeched into the parking lot 23 floors below. “We’ll go home to him and Hobi-hyung and listen to it together.”

Jimin continued coughing, sucking in desperate gulps of air.

“Tae-hyung bought new paints, too. And new canvases. You love painting with him. We’ll paint together. I think he has an art gallery coming up soon that we can go to, too.”

Jimin’s eyes fluttered open. Panic. Terror. Sucked in another wet breath, fingers grasping for Jungkook’s shirt.

“We’ll,” Jungkook choked, a shot of dizziness slamming into his head as his stomach throbbed. “We’ll curl up with the yellow blanket.” Black spots, purple spots dancing and dancing in his vision. “I’ll get you a glass… I’ll get you a glass of water and we’ll drink them before bed like we always do. You’ll be warm and- and safe. And in the morning you’ll wake me up with… with french fries and a new sauce. You’ll giggle and I’ll pretend to be mad.”

Jimin’s panicked breaths seemed to be easing as Jungkook talked, eyes blinking and blinking, as if he was fighting to stay awake.

“I’ll finally ask you out.” Tears- hot, fast. Sobs bubbling up despite himself. “We’ll go on a date to the Han River. Do you… do you remember when we explored Seoul and- and ate ramen and talked and- and then we fell asleep under the stars? We’ll explore stars all around the world. I’ll take you. A-and I won’t - I won’t be scared to kiss you this time. Not anymore.”

Jimin’s eyes were half shut, breaths shallow and short. “You promise?”

Jungkook nodded quickly. “You’ve gotta stay awake, Jiminie. Stay awake for me.”

Jimin looked like he might have nodded, Jungkook watching as Jimin’s tiny hand curled into a fist with his pinky poking out. “Pinky promise?”

Jungkook entwined their pinkies. “I promise you.”

Jimin was smiling again, a dreamy little smile. Jungkook pressed a quick kiss to the corner of Jimin’s mouth as he started wheezing once more, not caring about the blood, the way Jimin’s body was convulsing.

“I love you.”

Jimin’s ocean eyes were sliding shut, barely open a crack, body unmoving. A bloodied angel, wings unfurling. The tiny rise and fall of his chest was stuttering, and Jungkook was already feeling the panic clawing bone white through his mind.

“I didn’t… tell you,” Jimin was whispering.

Somewhere to the side, a bird was perched on the ledge overlooking Seoul.

Jungkook leaned forward until their foreheads were pressed together, cupping Jimin’s face.

“I didn’t tell you, Jungkook-ah.”

“Tell me what?”

“I lied to you.” Jimin’s lips were barely moving.

Jungkook shook his head, chin trembling, everything shaking. “It’s okay, it’s okay. I lied to you, too.”

“No,” Jimin mumbled. “The… firs’ lie… I ever tol’ you.”

Jungkook shook Jimin a little, begging him to stay away, to open his eyes. The metal door to the roof was banging open, several voices screaming different commands as cops started flooding the roof.

The bird hopped a little, quirking its little head, pearly black eye blinking as quick as a camera shutter.

“When we met… in the lobby… you asked me…” Jimin’s eyes were shut, voice getting quieter and quieter. “You asked me if I… liked coffee. I said… no. But I love… I love coffee. It was… firs’ lie. M’sorry. ”

Jungkook was nodding quickly, running his hand through Jimin’s hair to soothe him. “Okay, it’s okay. I forgive you, okay? Stay awake for me-”

“Hold me?” Jimin mumbled sleepily.

“I’m holding you.”

“Thank you.”

The bird unfurled its wings, stretching them out. Hadn’t flown its whole life, having been caged.

“I love you, Jungkook.”

“I love you, too, Jimin. I love you, too.”

The bird gave its wings a little shake, it’s eye still focused on the blood bath before it.

Jimin was smiling.

Wings catching wind, leaping from the ledge, free.

“Jimin?”

And the bird flew.

Chapter End Notes

sorry it's been so long. i'll try to have the last chapter out soon so that you won't be left on too much of a cliffhanger. i'm sorry if my writing isn't as good as it used to be, or if the writing feels rushed or more awkward... i've been going through something really difficult and might have some... ptsd??... haha and i haven't been able to leave my bed in 3 months because i have *jazz hands* crippling depression *jazz hands* and couldn't find the energy to write... so i'm sorry about the writing. i think this is the best it's going to get haha..

thank you for the constant support and comments, though. they meant so, so much to me. they gave me a little bit of hope and a little bit of happiness with each one. inspired me to write this chapter, and the next/last one.
also
we got an entire comeback?? and it was amazing??? jungkook's high notes in 'ON' and jimin's dancing in the black swan mv?? stan kings.

note tag: angst with HAPPY ENDING ;)

still with you

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

medics, medics everywhere

blood, blood, blood

red, red blood staining every surface

every surface and hand

blood, red blood

Jimin wasn't breathing, he wasn't breathing anymore and the medics were ripping Jimin away from him, trying to tell Jungkook something. Couldn't hear anything, every word garbled and unrecognizable. It was too much; everything was too much.

Movement blurring in patches of motion around him, a frozen merry-go-round, rotting youth rusting it's edges.

Jimin, Jimin was shifted onto a stretcher, shirt being torn open, medical bags turned inside out at the rate the paramedics were working on him. A wire, pulling a wire, confusion and murmured words before the wire was tugged and out popped a little black box hidden in Jimin's clothes.

Reality shocked back to Jungkook, someone's hands on him. Hands cupping his face, turning it this way and that. Light, lightheaded, world swaying as he fought to keep his eyes on Jimin.

flashlight shining into his eyes

world blacking out

pupils stinging

The person was saying something, trying to get Jungkook's shattered attention.

Jungkook locked eyes on the medical mask, gloved hands prodding along him, the person's chin moving up and down with speech.

Muffled, sounds muffled, confusion. Flashlight was back, blinding light in his eyes as a gloved finger pushed his eyelid up, looking for something.

"...hurt?"

Jungkook shook his head, tears long dried. Tired, so tired. Felt too sleepy, too confused for all this talking and noise. Eyes lazily drifted back to where Jimin was, medical personnel crowded around Tae and Jin as well.

He couldn't speak, only felt the hands on him, more than one pair now. Prodding and invading and pulling his line of sight away from the bloodied body he'd held in his arms not a moment before. Heard a crack as CPR was started, Jimin's sternum snapped out of place as medics worked furiously to revive him.

“...your name?” The person in front of him was asking, someone else positioning themselves to block Jungkook’s view.

Jungkook’s eyes, bruised and bloodshot and terrified, snapped to the woman kneeling in front of him.

Body bags.

Body bags in the corner of Jungkook’s vision. Light flecks of brain matter splattered on the pavement where Jungkook lay, the pool of blood beneath him only growing bigger.

“He has... gunshot... torso… on the stretcher...” The medic was saying as they realized the blood wasn’t all Jimin’s after all.

Jungkook’s head tipped back harshly, cracking back against the cement as his body started tremouring on its own. Couldn’t, couldn’t even think. Body bags and blood and brain splattered around him. CPR, still pumping, pure desperation.

Motion, blurred motion. Muscles seizing and relaxing and seizing once more. Words, hands, people working furiously.

Jungkook passed out long before he realized Jimin was gone.

Jungkook squinted against the winter sunlight, taking a few cautious steps into the cemetery.

Sprinkled patches of melting snow littered the ground, whisked clouds dappling the too-bright sky above him. There was a definite chill in the air, one that sunk straight into his bones. Eyes, his eyes were watering, hadn’t been outside in months.

But he needed to find *him* .

He held a simple flower in his hand. A white and yellow daffodil. It was a pretty little thing, freshly bought in one of the rare floral shops still open at this time of year. But he’d needed it, he’d found it, and now he was here.

He wandered, meandering past rows of gravestones. Gravestones short and tall, faded and brand new. Letters bleeding green from weathering, others unreadable. It was a place of both remembering and forgetting, and Jungkook wasn’t sure which one he was there for.

He faltered after the first few rows, boots crunching on slushy snow as he peered around, squinting against the harsh white light. Everything in his body was telling him to turn back, to just get in his car and drive away.

Run, run, run. Needed to run, to leave, to get away from the demons lurking six feet below, in this very soil.

no

Kept moving, he needed to keep walking. Needed to do this, to push on, to push forward. Needed to face this one thing that’d haunted him for the past year and some odd months.

Jungkook needed to find *him* .

So he trudged along the faint, snow-laden dirt path, the daffodil clutched tightly in his trembling hands.

A bird chirped overhead, a promise of the coming spring.

"... severe… taken from… should… everything is…"

Light shot into his eyes as some semblance of consciousness touched his mind, the world around him blinding. Numbness. Body was numb. Like the feeling after you've scraped your knee on asphalt and put a dry bandage over it. Tight, tingling numbness.

"Administer another… the IV fluids..."

"This one?"

"... bandages… but you don't want…"

Trying to understand, to focus, was too much. Groaned, shifted just a tiny bit. Dulled, stinging pain rippling up the right side of his torso.

"... I learned it… okay good, like that… see? You're getting it…"

"Should we change his… to help with…"

Something soothing flowed right to Jungkook's head just then, the nurses moving around the room expertly, dimming the lights for him just a bit. Curtain drawn back, someone else approaching the bed.

The nurses went silent. Still there, tugging and wrapping something around a patch of dull stinging on his arm. Applying something cooling, touching over some parts Jungkook couldn't feel either pain or numbness from.

Sleepy, feeling sleepy again.

Jungkook was caught in a strange whiteness, drifting in and out, thinking and not thinking.

dreams

a world of dreams and awakeness

consciousness and unconsciousness

youth

youth wasting away amidst bandages and hospital sheets

Sometimes he was aware of the tinkling voices of the nurses. Sometimes he opened his eyes and looked around, everything distant and distorted and strange.

He could see, he could see but he couldn't. He couldn't understand the world around him and why

he was here and what he was doing. But before he could really process much, exhaustion would set in, so heavy, and his eyelids would slam shut as he went under once more.

It was more than just physical, is what he learned from the whispered words of doctors and nurses.

Broken, is the word that floated around Jungkook's head and sunk into his skin. His mind is broken.

Police officers and detectives stopped by often, trying to get more information on what had happened on the rooftop. But even in the haze of numbness Jungkook's mind was settled into, he refused to speak a single word.

He couldn't conjure any type of feelings towards the law, towards officials. He'd long since lost any and all hope in them. In his shallow, floating thoughts, he could only remember the corruption Minwo had exposed on the rooftop, how he'd paid off the law to let Jungkook go. To let him stumble his way towards that roof, bathed in blood.

The detectives would ask and prompt and even try to bait him but Jungkook didn't spare them even a look, oddly fixated on the light streaming in through the window. There was no use in saying anything, so he didn't. He stayed silent, and he dreamt his days away.

There was concern around him, but Jungkook remained pleasantly detached. Sometimes he would see a bird perched on the windowsill of his hospital room, and he'd smile. Smile and smile, reaching a weak hand up and up, imagining himself running his fingers through silken feathers.

And then a rot would bubble up under his skin. Rotten wood, rotten youth. And his hand would fall back to his sheets, smile slipping away as he sank into a sudden hysteria.

The nurses would scramble as Jungkook screamed and cried, begging and begging for nonsensical things.

Eventually the detectives and police officers' visits faded away.

The first moment of reality Jungkook began to experience outside his haze came from the first familiar face to visit him.

"Jungkook-ah"

Jungkook usually paid no mind to people talking to him or around him. He'd gotten used to the constant buzz of the hospital, the nurses flitting around the room, the occasional doctor coming in with a clipboard. They would try to talk to him, but he was always too busy staring out the window, looking for birds.

But this voice, this voice stirred something inside Jungkook's mind, pushing past the dormant fog that'd settled in his now dulled eyes.

For the first time since the rooftop, however long or short a passage of time it'd been, Jungkook's gaze shifted away from the window and towards the person standing before his bed.

"Hey, kid," Yoongi whispered almost delicately as he took another cautious step towards Jungkook. "It's been a while."

Yoongi… it was Yoongi. For a few moments Jungkook remained in his haze of nothingness, mind unable to comprehend that the person in his hospital room was even real. Jungkook blinked sluggishly as he slowly began to muster any sort of reality to confront this apparition.

And then Yoongi was right next to his bed, long, pale fingers reaching out and gently brushing against Jungkook's forearm, a little cold and clammy to the touch. Yoongi's tangerine scent filled his head and a dozen other things flooded his senses and suddenly it was too real.

The peaceful numbness shattered, flashes of that night barreling into his mind.

Blood and darkness and a broken sink as he'd stepped through the front door. Broken glass and his two hyungs lying in a pool of their own blood, cradled by the yellow blanket. Could suddenly feel the breeze coming from that opened bedroom window, the curtains billowing out as the crimson sunset loomed in the fading sky.

Jungkook's eyes snapped down to Yoongi's exposed arms, looking for where that metal bolt would've gone. And there was nothing there. Not a blemish or scratch on Yoongi's smooth, pale skin.

Bolted, bolted together. Yoongi and Hoseok had been bolted together in a gruesome mess of blood and gore, metal rods jammed through their arms to pin them together.

there was no way Yoongi wouldn't at least have a scar-

there was no way

simply no way unless-

Jungkook blinked and blinked, trying to process.

because he might've-

Was it possible to imagine something like that? It'd been so real, and Jungkook had seen it with his own two eyes. He'd seen it. He'd ***seen*** *it. He'd seen the blood, had seen the nail punctured into Hoseok's body, had ripped the note off with his own two hands.*

If that hadn't been real, what's to say anything had been real?

That the rooftop had even happened?

That even with Yoongi's touch, his scent, the sound of his breathing, that this real person could be fake.

That Jimin-

Seeing Jungkook's blooming hysteria, Yoongi took a step back, ripping his hand away as if he'd burned the maknae somehow. Jungkook's mind slammed further into panic, melting reality and delusions, watching as his hyung's already sugar-white skin paled even more.

And as much as Jungkook wanted to, he couldn't speak. Still couldn't speak. Confusion and agony

choked him, and he was suddenly wishing to once more fall into numbness and bliss.

confused

lost

drowning

Tears sliding over the deep red and purple smears beneath his eyes, over his papery skin. Feeling too much, an overload of emotions and non-emotions until his head felt like it would burst.

“I’m sorry, Jungkook-ah. Hyung is sorry… I’m so sorry...I’ll come back later.”

But Jungkook couldn’t fathom Yoongi leaving, not now. Real or not, he didn’t want his hyung to leave him. So he tried to speak, to open his mouth and tell Yoongi not to go. He tried, he tried, he tried. And every step Yoongi took towards the door had frustration tearing at Jungkook’s whole chest.

But he couldn’t speak, couldn’t get his mind to work his tongue, mouth glued shut into a deep frown as tears fell and fell, eyes crazed and glassy.

Yoongi left.

Jungkook sank back into his stupor over the next passage of time. Slipping in and out of consciousness, sleeping and waking, head filled with dreamless sleeps. But there was something unsettled in him now, something minute just barely managing to ground him to reality.

Time went by a lot slower, dragging on. He registered the ticking of the clock on the wall opposite of him, the dimming and dawning of light from the world outside.

He stopped watching for birds.

Yoongi didn’t come back.

He began to wonder if Yoongi was a real person to begin with.

—

“It’s okay to feel conflicted—“

“I’m not conflicted.”

“Then what are you feeling?”

“I don’t feel anything.”

“You don’t feel happy or sad or even angry?”

A shake of the head.

No.

“You’re innocent. You’re free. You don’t feel anything at all when I say that?”

Even numbness was a feeling. And Jungkook, he didn't even feel that. He shrugged.

They went back to painting with watercolor, a comfortable silence easing Jungkook's mind. His therapist encouraged comfort and natural conversation above all else.

He'd been to therapists that had pressed and prodded at his memories, that dragged him into the darkest depths of panic that would cling to him for days after their appointments. Jungkook had started to shut down, a ghostly quiet taking over him, something that hadn't happened since his first few months in the hospital.

It took Jin finally forbidding him from going back to his previous therapist for him to find someone with a gentler approach.

Someone who gifted him a sketchbook on their first visit and told him to try and draw every day if words were too difficult. To draw a plant, a dot, anything, but to just draw something. *Jungkook had scoffed at first, hadn't even given the sketchbook another glance.*

A week after that appointment, and with his next appointment already set to take place in a few days, Jungkook had finally understood the purpose of the sketchbook.

He'd spent the day with his legal team, who were still settling damages with the courts.

Talking, talking, so much rehashing of the dark memories locked in his skull. It was days like this where he would go home and writhe under the pressure in his head, mind about to implode with a primal panic that reduced him to a shaking, stuttering mess.

And that's when he'd seen the sketchbook sitting on his desk, untouched. And he'd grabbed it without thinking, tearing the cover open and grasping the neared pencil he could find. He'd scribbled and slashed at the page, the inky darkness in his mind imprinting onto the paper, tearing a bit beneath the sharp tip of graphite digging in too harshly.

He threw the sketchbook when he was done, tears of frustration splashing down his face as he crawled into his bed and fell asleep.

The next day he did it again.

And again.

His therapist asked him if he'd been drawing like she'd asked.

He said he had.

She'd just nodded, a pleased, gentle smile on her face as she took out watercolor paints and laid them in front of him.

Over the weeks and months to follow, his scribbles turned into shapes— a plant, a car, his bedroom window. His reality began to unfold once more, and with each day that he went to therapy, that he drew and watercolored and talked or didn't talk about what he'd been through, the nightmares slowly, slowly *began to ease.*

The dread that would force its way into his very blood, unable to escape the battering of horrific thoughts and images, the flashes of anxiety that would leave him sweating and panting and growling out tears of rage and helplessness… they gently, carefully left his body one drop at a time.

Some days, he'd lose a drop and gain an entire downpour.

Panic attacks left him exhausted and irritable. His dreams left him fearful of falling asleep. He was terrified of going out into public, fearing that every shadow flickering against the edge of his vision was Minwo, sometimes even hearing the phantom popping of gunshots and ripping flesh.

It was an aching, painfully slow process of even getting to the point where he could think *about healing. About getting the toxic sludge out of his head. It wasn't something he could control, his panic attacks weren't things he could talk himself down from— he just had to let them run their course or he'd spend the next hours with fried nerves and tear-swollen eyes and a pressuring dread beneath his skin.*

He kept Jimin far from his thoughts, unable to accept the onslaught of pain that would come with it. It was best for him to keep his distance for now— he had a lot of healing to do. It didn't make it hurt any less though.. but one day, one day he'd visit Jimin.

Someday.

Jungkook shook his head, the uneasy memories of his 7 months spent in the hospital and mental ward cradling his mind as he made his way through the cemetery.

Those 7 months had been hell, a constant wonder of what was real and not real. The gradual awareness of what reality was returned to him slowly over the 6 months after Yoongi first visited him.

It'd been almost impossible to accept that he'd hallucinated the blood and gore at the house before he'd ran to the GCF building. That Yoongi and Hoseok *had* been tied to a bomb, but there was no blood, the note not nailed into Hoseok's flesh, their arms not bolted together with a metal rod. No blood.

After that realization was a slow process of piecing together what had actually happened and what was still happening. The rooftop had been real. What'd happened to his hyungs, his family, had been very real. What had happened to Jimin— that had been real, too.

He eventually gained enough cohesiveness to process real life, to talk to the detectives and confirm the evidence and story they'd already uncovered and pieced together.

Jungkook had been cleared as innocent by the courts.

Strangely enough, he didn't feel anything towards being deemed innocent. His therapist especially had been concerned about it. Even over a year later, he still wasn't sure how to feel.

Rage, perhaps? A sense of deep loss— he'd lost *years* of his life to Minwo. His innocence in any sense of the word had been trampled out of him. He still hadn't been to GCF. He'd resigned, leaving his position for the foreseeable future. He didn't know if he could ever step foot near that building again.

The media had been a whirlwind, something he'd carefully eased himself into after he'd been released from the hospital a year before. He hadn't wanted to even turn on his phone, didn't want to see himself on the news and have to read through headlines still questioning his story, his pain, his innocence.

He avoided it. Avoided people, avoiding media, staying far away from anything and everything.

Surprisingly enough, media painted the GCF tragedy as something obvious: *of course Jungkook had been innocent.* He'd been innocent all along.

The articles conforming his innocence were almost a written scoff— *of course* he was innocent. It was *so obvious.* The people who doubted should feel *ashamed* for the suffering CEO Jeon Jungkook went through.

It was a sham. Reading and watching the news had his stomach roiling with unease and hurt at the words that'd been burned into his skin by those very same people who had so easily branded him a cold blooded criminal.

They'd changed their narrative so quickly, probably embarrassed at the glaringly obvious slander and defamation of an innocent person.

It made Jungkook sick. So he stopped using social media of any kind and stuck to his drawings— an assignment from his therapist that had turned into a hobby.

His hyungs were deeply damaged in their own ways. Some more physically hurt than mental, but Jungkook found it hard to look them in the eyes without seeing flashes of his first hallucinations. Without seeing Yoongi and Hoseok gruesomely nailed together. Or the real memories of Tae and Jin bloodied and shot on the rooftop.

Looking into their eyes brought everything back. He could see the deep rooted pain in their darkened eyes, the trauma. Could see how deeply they'd been cut up inside. No longer was it sympathetic glances and reassuring hugs towards Jungkook, it was empathy. An accute understanding of his pain because they knew what it was like to be Minwo's victim.

It took months for Jungkook to be able to look them in the eyes. Months for him to be able to *talk* to them.

Even a year after being released from the hospital, a year of living with his hyungs again, they were still finding small ways to reconnect with each other, to repair what had been shattered, to mend the damage their trauma had inflicted on their makeshift family.

With Jimin gone, Jungkook wasn't sure whether he was truly making any progress sometimes. His last memories of the man he loved were riddled with violence and blood. Clutching a fading light, crimson pooling on concrete, starry eyes glazing over and light slipping away.

It was a gaping wound in his heart and mind he hadn't been able to mend. He was nervous for today especially, for being able to see Jimin after over a year.

Shaking away his thoughts, he arrived at the tombstone he'd been looking for. The daffodil had wilted in Jungkook's clammy palms, the winter air nipping his hands red with cold.

A sudden pang of confusion and doubt rushed up through his entire body, swallowing his lungs, hard to breathe. Looked from the flower in his hands to the grave at his feet.

how could you think this would help?

you think this will change anything?

your demons aren't leaving because you placed a flower on a grave

Jungkook blinked, swallowing past the sand in his throat, trying desperately to keep the swelling panic from sending his mind into a frenzy. Drew scribbles in his head, putting a visualization to his blooming anxiety.

He closed his eyes, tears sliding hot down his cheeks, cold and uncomfortable by the time they dripped from his chin. He took deep, shuddering breaths, almost pleading for his mind to let him have a moment of calm and clarity, to let him do this.

The crash and swell of confusion and hurt and blinding fury and fear took its time. He recognized it as an oncoming panic attack, groaning in frustration at himself as it made its way through him.

It wasn't a loud and violent panic attack, but a silent one that had him frozen in his tracks, unable to move or think beyond the terror seizing his mind. Lightheaded as everything became too much. Too much, always too much.

He let it happen. Waited until it was done. Waited a while after it had subsided to open his eyes once more. Whiped the tears from his face with the back of his hand.

The winter landscape surrounding him was still the same, the ground mushy with melting snow beneath his feet, his longer black hair gently caressed by a breeze.

And then he gently, ever so carefully, bent down. With trembling hands he placed the flower on the cold, wintry ground beneath him. The name on the tombstone was eye level, slashing through his head like a hot knife.

Kim Minwo

Jungkook flinched, hands shaking as his hand brushed the soft petals of the daffodil once more before he stood back up.

"I'm here.. I'm here to let you go." Jungkook felt so fucking stupid standing there, talking to a slab of stone, all alone in a graveyard. But he needed this. He needed to have this moment.

He was shaking, his nose red with cold, tears burning his eyes, still slipping silently down his cheeks. "I'm ready… I'm ready to move on."

are you?

Jungkook grit his teeth, jaw aching with how hard it was clenched. "How is it that even though you're dead, you're still in my fucking mind?"

Jungkook had struggled with Minwo's death. It felt like a slap in the face from fate, knowing that Minwo would never truly face the consequences of his actions.

Jungkook would never be able to look into Minwo's eyes and tell him he'd lost. That Jungkook was moving on and living happily, that Minwo would spend the rest of his days rotting in a prison cell.

But Minwo was gone. And yet his legacy lived on in Jungkook's very blood. In the thoughts tormenting his mind, in the flashes of memory he'd get of that horrible night. Minwo lived on in the power he still had over Jungkook, even dead.

He lived on in Jungkook's hyungs, who were tormented and damaged in their own ways. And he lived on in Hayoon, who was locked away in a psych ward still, crazed and deranged and mind broken.

Jungkook had only gone to visit her once but the fragments of who she'd been before were long gone, only a physical body left that could even hint that she'd once been Lee Hayoon, the woman he'd grown to know over the course of the trials.

Jungkook stared at that name, the bold letters carved into stone.

Kim Minwo

Kim Minwo

Kim Minwo

It was hammered into his mind, burning his eyes. That name. That man. The ruins he'd left Jungkook's life in.

He didn't know just how long he stood there, staring at the grave, at the wilted daffodil. He was too lost in thought to recognize the sound of footsteps on mushy earth behind him.

"Jungkook-ah?"

That voice. Jungkook hadn't heard that voice in a long, long time.

he's probably not even real

how are you sure this isn't your imagination?

jimin left you again, he left

why don't you-

Fingertips brushing his shoulder. Even through his thick coat, Jungkook could feel the feather light touch. He took a deep breath, reaching up with his opposite hand and carefully wrapped his ice cold fingers over Jimin's.

real

he's real

"Jungkook?"

A shuttered breath. Not enough air in Jungkook's lungs. Trembling, his hands were trembling. He turned around.

"Jimin."

Chapter End Notes

hello... haha...
so it's been over a year. a lot has happened in my life. a lot of.. bad things.. but a ton of good things too :) i hope some readers still stuck around until now. thank you for those who gave me constant support and found me on twitter to dm me or anyone that left

comments for me even during this hiatus. if you want, follow me on twitter @daechwita_pjm ... i'm actually really active on there.. anyways it gave me a lot of hope during some very bleak moments reading all of your sweet comments and dms. there will be 1 more chapter from jimins pov as i found it awkward to put both in this one chapter.. i know you must be thinking you'll have to wait another year but.. i'll really really try okay :D
anyways, love you all a ton.

authors note

new note (3/5/22)
i will be deleting this work soon. i've gotten so many entitled and rude comments being absolutely nasty to me and i've decided i just don't want to deal with this story anymore. i appreciate those readers who took my story for what it was and loved it or critiqued it but it's a fanfic. i want to be left alone and constantly getting notifs of comments viciously cursing me out and being toxic are really not what i want or care to read. i love bts, i do, but i've since moved on and am no longer a fan… more of an occasional listener. and seeing this fanfic constantly with nothing but being berated or sneered at for something i wrote 3 years ago and haven't touched since is just… not it. i've considered turning comments off completely but hadn't because i thought there are still good comments and i don't want to lose that but at this point i am absolutely done. i'm working on going through all my comments and saving the ones that mean a lot to me and from then on i will delete this.

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hi everyone!
this is the note nobody would want to get at the end of an uncompleted story but i need to be straight up. im not going to finish it. im sorry. a lot of you will be angry or disappointed but i don't have it in me anymore to finish this story.

i've worked on it over the course of almost 4 years now and it's fallen apart a lot. there's a ton of inconsistencies in the plot and things i want to tie up but would have to do a lot of rereading and editing and getting into that mindset again and i don't really want to.

that chapter in my life has closed.. im in a better place now and doing really good. im not in pain like i was and it's harder to put myself in that mindset and write the way this story needs to be written. a ton of the content in this i no longer relate to or have any interest in finishing.

i also feel like a lot of people are overly critical of this story and i feel a little flattered cause it is just a fanfic and if it's that investing that it gets people analyzing it that's pretty cool /gen. but in the end… i'm not a professional writer. there are potholes, inconsistencies, character flaws, etc. i've seen a lot that this story needs an editor, etc but… it's just a fanfic. it's a story i wrote on the sidelines of my life, you know? it's not meant to be published or sold, it's made to exist on a fanfic site. there are better stories than mine for sure (ones that i deeply love and cherish) so find those stories for yourselves as well.

i love everyone and the overwhelming support this story has. it was a way for me to express my own pain and hurt. there are a ton of things i can't read in this story because i hate that i wrote them. there's a lot of faults and things that bug me and i see people point them out a lot which is totally fine, but my disinterest in finishing this story has only grown over the last 2 years and i feel like it wouldn't make me happy to finish it.

i'm deeply sorry. i feel like i've failed in some way. in other ways, i dug myself a hole in this story that i haven't been able to get out of and don't know how to resolve a lot of things without it being messy, rushed and cluttered. tbh i wanted to end this story with chapter 49 on an unresolved ending and i think i should've just done that instead of promising another chapter or two. i was going to write a jimin pov for chapter 50 and a conclusion/moving on ending for 51 but i just… have no desire to. i personally like where it ended at 49. i'm sorry… i'll update the tags to say unresolved ending or something.

maybe i will finish it someday, but for now i'm marking it as completed.

anyways, thank you!! love you all! personally i really am doing good and i’m not hurting like i was so thank you for sticking with me all these years. your comments really touched me and kept me inspired but now it’s time for me to close this chapter. love y’all! purple you!!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!